

HOURS WITH THE BIBLE

OR

THE SCRIPTURES IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN DISCOVERY
AND KNOWLEDGE

BY

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND WORDS OF CHRIST"

VOL. IV.

FROM REHOBAM TO HEZEKIAH

WITH THE CONTEMPORARY PROPHETS

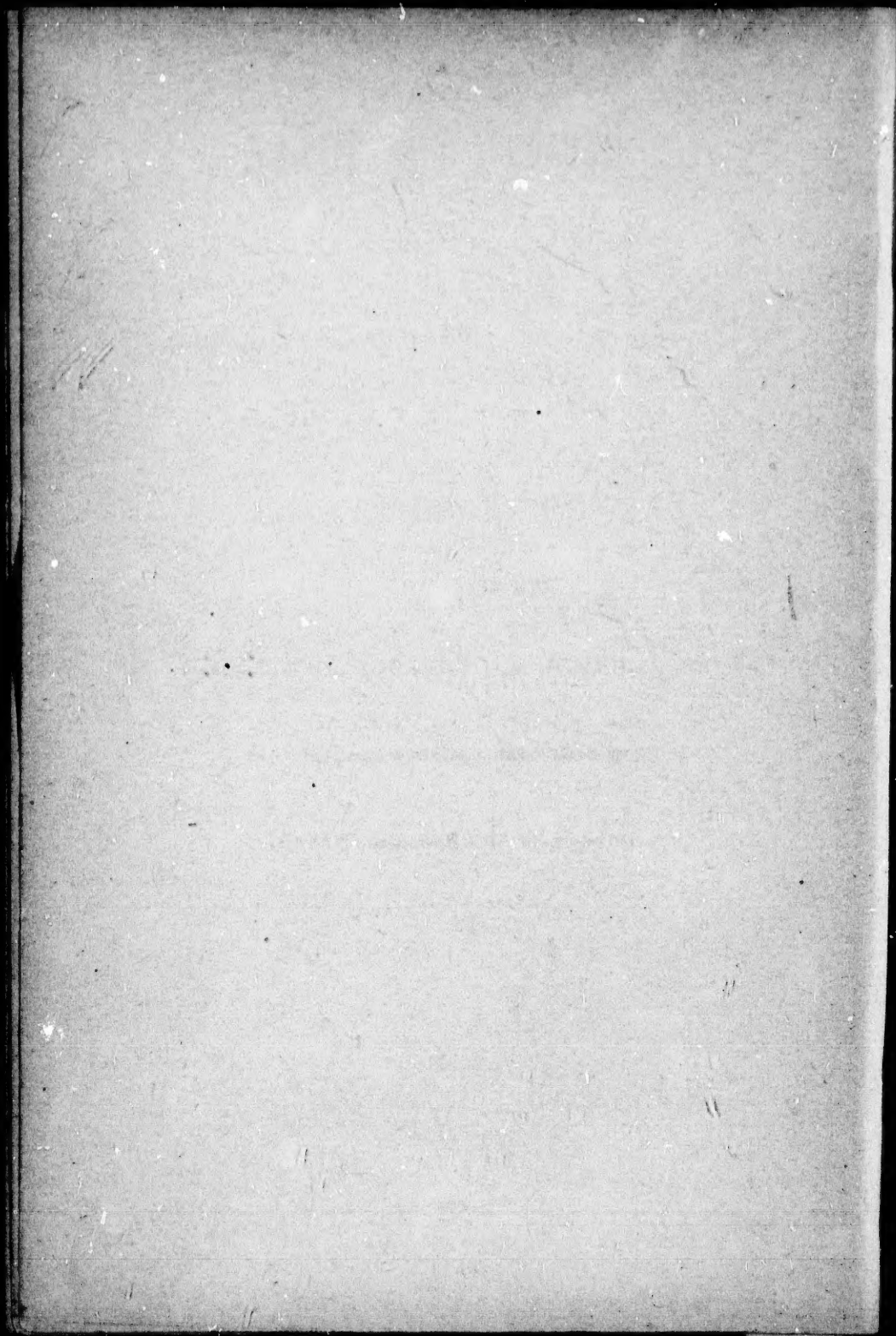
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK

JAMES POTT, PUBLISHER

19 ASTOR PLACE

1882



TO MY FRIEND OF FRIENDS,

—KIND—BRAVE—TRUE—

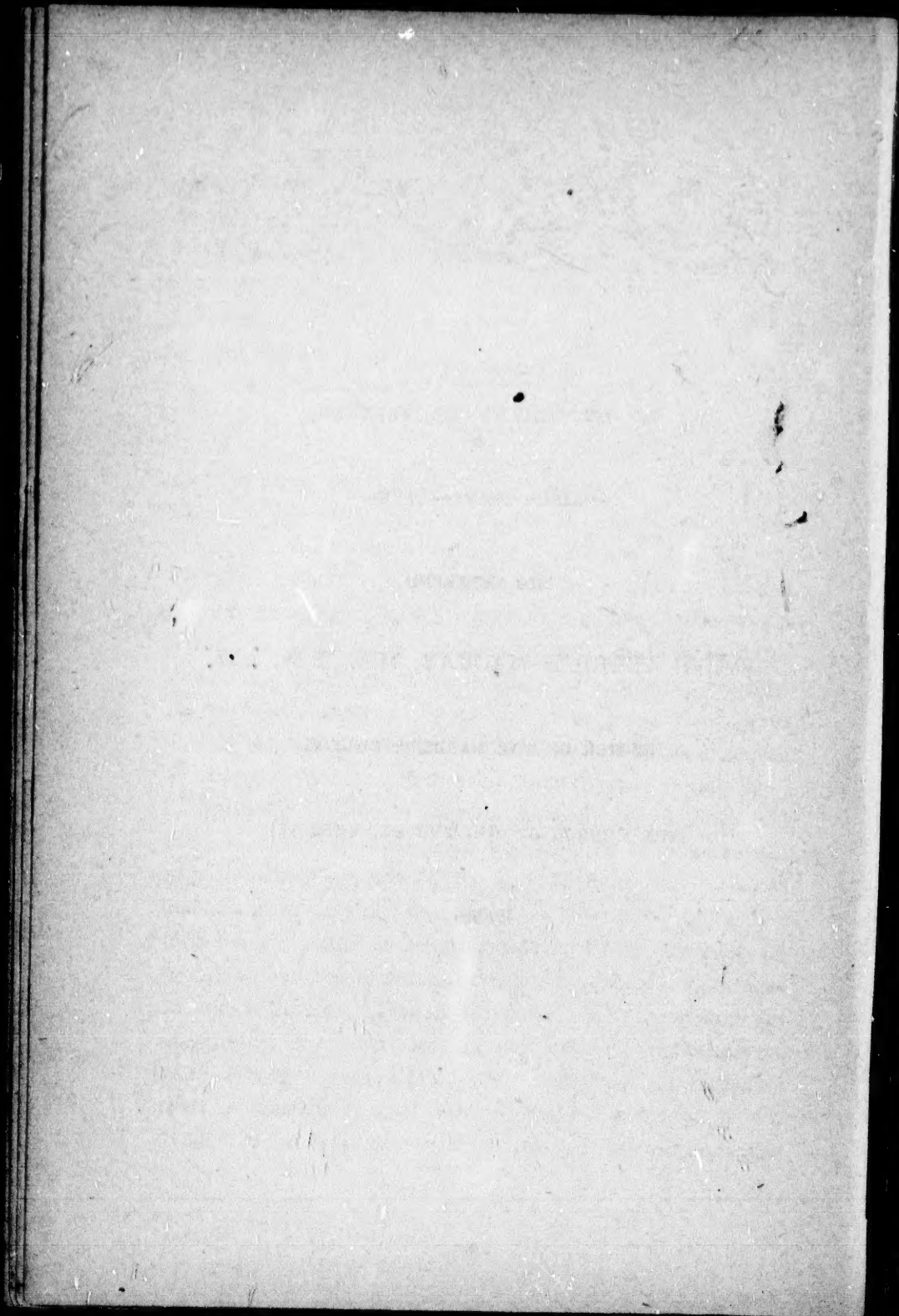
THE REVEREND

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PREFACE.

HAVING now, after nearly three years work, reached the close of the fourth volume of these Hours with the Bible, I beg to thank the public very sincerely for the favour with which they have been pleased to receive my effort to set before them "The Scriptures, in the light of Modern Discovery and Knowledge." Should my life be continued till the whole undertaking is finished, they may depend on no labour being spared to make it, throughout, as thorough and reliable as I possibly can.

In the present volume, as in the last, the opportunity has been taken, where it offered, of calling attention to the references in the later Books of Scripture, to the earlier. The publication of Dr. Robertson Smith's book, "The Old Testament in the Jewish Church," and the stir its wild and startling assertions have caused, make this especially desirable, for such incidental contradictions to his extreme views are of great weight. It was, of course, inevitable, that a controversy respecting the origin and structure of the Pentateuch should one day rise; but that it should have been opened by a gentleman of such ultra opinions as Dr. Smith, is a misfortune. Nor is it

less to be regretted that in mooted theories so unwelcome to the mass of his countrymen, by whom the beliefs he impugns have been regarded as sacred, he should not have shown more of the humility and diffidence becoming under such circumstances. To brand the clergy and educated laity of the three kingdoms, his own followers excepted, as "traditionalists;" to arrogate to himself the glory of a scientific religionist, and to despise every one else as the reverse; to tell all who do not agree with him that they "show the usual presumption of un-historical rationalism," is neither wise nor decorous. But years and wider study will teach Dr. Smith to be less confident and contemptuous. We must submit to it at present as only pretty Fanny's way, and wait till it pass.

That various documents have been incorporated in the Books known as the Pentateuch is not matter of question. Every one grants it. Nor is it necessary to assume that Moses was the author of the five Books as a whole. The portions *said* to have been written by him may, indeed, be all that he himself, with his own hand, set down. But that Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, except a few fragments, date from nearly a thousand years after Moses; that the story of the Tabernacle, of the institution of the great yearly feasts, of the Levitical economy, and indeed, even the laws which governed the Jewish people, are all "legal fictions," invented as long after the dates they affect to bear as the interval from this present year to the reign of king Alfred in Wessex, are rather strong assertions at the very opening of a controversy.

Dr. Smith, of course, has no doubt that he is right.

He tells us repeatedly that "there is no doubt," that "it is quite certain," that "the plain fact is," that "the conclusion is inevitable," when he gives forth an opinion. No faintest perfume of modesty flavours his superciliousness. His Sir Oracle tone never leaves him. The world must accept him as a Daniel come to judgment. No dog of a "traditionalist" must bark when he opes his mouth.

It is nevertheless beyond question that his theory of the origin of the middle books of the Pentateuch after the Exile, is rejected by all but the Jacobins of Biblical criticism. He has simply adopted the teaching of the school of Kuenen and Wellhausen, who in this follow Graf, George, and Vatke. There is no tincture of originality in any single page of his book. He forgets to tell the audiences who listened to his lectures that his theory as to Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, was opposed to those of De Wette, Ewald, Von Lengerke, Knobel, Bleek, Dillmann, Riehm, Kleinert, and others, compared with whom Kuenen and Wellhausen are very minute authorities indeed.

It is impossible in a preface to discuss points on which so much has been written as the sources of the Pentateuch. An extract from Bleek may, however, show that Dr. Smith is very far from stating what is "certain" or "beyond doubt." "Although the Pentateuch," says Bleek, "in its present state and extent may not have been composed by Moses, and also many of the single laws in it may be the product of a later age, still, the legislation contained in it is generally Mosaic in its entire spirit and character, and this applies, not only to the part which

relates to the general moral commands, such as the Decalogue, but also to what refers to the Levitical laws of purifying, which constitute so important a part of it. The art of authorship must have been actually in use among the people of Israel in the Mosaic age; since, if this were not the case, such laws could hardly have been recorded in such detailed completeness at that time. In the Pentateuch (at least as regards these three middle books), we stand principally on *historic* ground. In these laws, the very external circumstances of the people of Israel are clearly presupposed as the historical part of the Pentateuch presents them to us, and they thus serve to attest generally the historical character of the book."¹

The dogmatic confidence with which Dr. Smith rests great conclusions on fanciful grounds might be illustrated in many instances. Let one suffice. The word *Matzaibah* occurs in the Old Testament in two senses: the one that of a simple memorial stone; the other, that of a sun-pillar, or pillar used in connection with the worship of the Sun. The usage is, indeed, much the same as in such words as "relic" and "image" among ourselves. Each has a common and also a religious meaning.

A *Matzaibah* of the former kind was set up by Jacob as a witness to the covenant made by God with him at Bethel, and a memorial of it.² A second was a witness to his covenant made with Laban.³ A third raised by him at Bethel on his return to Canaan, to attest the

¹ Bleek, *Intro. to Old Test.*, vol. i. p. 221, Eng. Trans. See also *Studien u. Kritiken*, 1831, pp. 488-524.

² Gen. xxviii. 18, 22; xxxi. 13.

³ Gen. xxxi. 45, 51, 52.

second covenant made by God with him.¹ A fourth was set up by him as a tombstone over Rachel's grave.² Moses raised twelve of these memorial stones when the tribes accepted the covenant made with them by God; as evidence of their having done so.³ And in the same way, Isaiah says that, when Egypt turns to Jehovah, a Matzaibah will be erected at its border, to Jehovah, "and it shall be *for a sign and a witness* unto Jehovah of Hosts in the Land of Egypt,⁴—that is, a witness between Him and His people of their covenant relations.

The other use of the word is invariably in connection with Sun worship, the idolatry of Canaan and other countries. Thus in Exodus xxiii. 24, the "Matzaiboth"⁵ of the Canaanites are to be "broken down, *and their gods utterly overthrown.*" In Exodus xxxiv. 13, the foul Asherahs of Sun worship are similarly classed along with them. In Leviticus xxvi. 1 it is forbidden to make *such* a Matzaibah, thus flagrantly associated with idolatry. So in Deuteronomy vii. 5, xii. 3; 1 Kings xiv. 23; 2 Kings iii. 2. In this last passage they are taken out of the House of Baal by Jehu and burned. So, 2 Kings xvii. 10. The Hebrews had adopted heathenism and its Matzaiboth, and hence these were thus constantly denounced. Hezekiah, indeed, broke them down where they stood, beside the Asherahs and Bamoth, or heathen high places.⁶ The very people united with him in doing so.⁷ Asa, also, had previously done the same.⁸

¹ Gen. xxxv. 14.² Gen. xxxv. 20.³ Exod xxiv. 4, 7.⁴ Isaiah xix. 19.⁵ Plural of Matzaibah.⁶ 2 Kings xviii. 4.⁷ 2 Chron. xxxi. 1.⁸ 2 Chron. xiv. 3.

That these Matzaiboth were idolatrous sun-pillars—or perhaps pyramidal stones—is thus sufficiently clear, but Jeremiah puts it beyond question by using this word for the obelisks before the great Sun temple at On, in Egypt.¹ Only one more instance of its use occurs in the Old Testament, where Ezekiel applies it to the symbols of Baal in the temples of Tyre.²

Now for Dr. Smith's deduction from the second meaning of the word. He assumes that Jacob set up an *idolatrous sun-pillar*, and founds on this the assertion that such a symbol of Baal and of the foul Asherah, the emblem of lust and impurity, "had been used by the patriarchs, and continued to exist in sanctuaries of Jehovah down to the eighth century."³ He complacently adds, "This detail is one of the clearest proofs that Deuteronomy was unknown till long after the days of Moses"! The whole book is, I regret to say, neither better nor worse than this sample.

Dr. Smith's book, as a specimen of hasty and superficial criticism is hardly, however, the most discouraging sign of the unhealthy spirit of destructiveness abroad. In the new volume of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," Dr. Wellhausen, of all men, has been intrusted with the article on Israel. Abraham or Isaac are not even named in it, and the story of Moses is diminished to a thread. He does not mention Joseph. In fact the Bible is a mere trickle of history through a meadow of fable! As to the Pentateuch, he of course gives forth, with in-

¹ Jer. xliii. 13.

² Ezek. xxvi. 11, (*Smend*).

³ Pages 353, 226.

vincible assurance, the views which Dr. Robertson Smith has already copied from him as his own staple.

Thorough, reverent discussion is not only commendable but imperative. But that two or three would-be prophets should stalk about in their sheepskins over the land, proclaiming themselves the depositaries of all knowledge respecting the Bible, and branding all others as ignorant and owl-eyed, is intolerable. Yet the evil will work its own cure. Articles like those of Dr. Wellhausen will keep many an old fashioned household from letting the "Encyclopædia Britannica" enter it, and books like that of Dr. Robertson Smith will bring out their antidote in sober and reverent criticism, worthy of general respect.

122, CHEYNE WALK, CHELSEA,
April 6th, 1882.

NOTE TO PAGE 384.

In Isaiah xxix. 1, 2, "Ariel" is translated by Knobel and Delitzsch—from Hitzig, who, however seems latterly to have changed his opinion—by "the Hearth of God." An Arabic root is the justification of this rendering. Gesenius, Von Ewald, Drechsler, Cheyne, and others translate it, as in the text, "Lion" or "Lioness of God."

P.S.—As a sample of torturing well known words into fanciful meanings, to suit a theory, a sentence or two on Dr. Smith's achievements in this way may be of interest.

The Hebrew word for Priest is Cohain. It is found also in the Chaldee, Syriac, Ethiopic and Arabic, in the same sense. But among the pagan Arabs it meant, besides, a diviner, or soothsayer, from the fact that in very remote times the functions of a soothsayer and priest were usually joined. Other meanings

occur in the use of the word in the cognate languages—for example, in Syriac it means a rich man—but all these senses are in the opinion of Gesenius only secondary, and spring from the primary one of a *priest's* station or power. The original force of the word is still unknown. Hitzig derives it from the verb "to stand"—Cohain thus meaning "one who stands by"—"an assistant." Maurer thinks it comes from the verb for "to bow"—as is done in worship.¹ But Dr. Smith rushes in where so much more learned men fear to tread, and at once decides, or rather insinuates that the Old Testament priests were virtually soothsayers, "chiefly distinguished by their qualification to give an oracle."² This extraordinary freak of interpretation has for its object the trying to make it be believed that the true office of a priest was of a very late date. He has even the courage to assert, in support of this fancy, that "the popular religion of Israel was closely modelled on the forms of Semitic heathenism"!!

The way in which the word Torah—"the" or "a law" is put on the rack, is almost more extraordinary. It comes from the verb "to teach," from which also the word Moreh, "teaching" or "a teacher" is derived. Now it so happens that in Genesis xii. 6 the plain, or rather, oak of Moreh, near Shechem,³ is mentioned. This is always understood to mean the oak or oaks belonging to the Canaanite Moreh, as in the case of the "oaks of Mamre,"⁴ a citizen of Hebron. But this will not do for Dr. Smith. Contrary to all authority, he tells us that Moreh "may mean a soothsayer," and hints that this throws light on the word Torah. He christens the oak of Moreh, therefore, "the Torah-giver's oak," and then gravely adds that it "is identical with the soothsayer's oak," Judges ix. 37. The only shadow of a ground for this flourish is Jacob's being stated, in Genesis xxxv. 4, to have buried the strange gods and earrings of his household "under the oak which was *in* or *close to* Shechem."⁵ But the oak of the Meonenim,⁶ or "soothsayers," as Dr. Smith translates it, was at a distance from Shechem, for the ambush of Abimelech is seen from afar, from the gate of the town, coming along the road leading from the oak to Shechem. Nor is this all. The word Meonenim does not mean "enchantments" or "sorceries," but "enchanters" or "sorcerers," and though the jewels buried might have been the former, they certainly were not the latter.

¹ Ges., *Thesaurus*, p. 662.

² Page 285.

³ In Dent. xi. 30, "the oaks of Moreh" are mentioned. In Judges vii. 1, "the hill of the Teacher" (Moreh) occurs: Moreh also means "the archer," "the early rain," which, as well as teaching, come from the idea of "shooting out," "sprinkling."

⁴ Gen. xiii. 18.

⁵ See Ges., *Lex.*, p. 791, on the prep. "in."

⁶ The word Meonenim means dealers in secret magic arts, sorcerers, idolatrous diviners.

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HOURS WITH THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

JEROBOAM I., B.C. 985-963.

NADAB, " 963-961.

KINGS OF JUDAH.

REHOBOAM, B.C. 985-968.

ABIJAH, " 968-965.

REHOBOAM, apparently the only son of Solomon, ascended the throne, on his father's death, amidst a general calm, and seemingly universal acquiescence. He was already 41 years of age, but had had the misfortune of being born in the purple, and of having grown up amidst the despotic and unpopular influences of a splendid and selfish court. If, moreover, he boasted Solomon for a father, his mother was a princess of Ammon, and, as such, an idolatress.¹ With a touch here and there of his father's shrewdness, he had inherited little of his other endowments, as often happens with the sons of great men. Short-sighted and haughty, as a rule, he was also deficient in the self-reliance so essential to an absolute king, and showed neither warlike capacity nor

¹ She was a daughter of Hanun, king of Ammon. 2 Sam. x. 1, compared with Sept. 1 Kings xii. 24.

spirit. In the circumstances amidst which his reign began, he was quite unfit to pilot the State through the dangers that threatened it. Incapable of realizing that any existed, he drove it on the rocks and wrecked it for ever.

David had received the homage of all the tribes while yet at Hebron, before the taking of Jerusalem, and Solomon had in the same way been publicly accepted as king before his father's death, on occasion of his enthronement in presence of the representatives of the nation.¹ More than a year,² however, seems to have elapsed after Rehoboam's accession before he took any steps in this direction, and it may be that even then, action was initiated by the tribes rather than by him. He seems, indeed, to have assumed that the throne was his right by succession, apart from any popular ratification of his claims, and to have acted with the same high-handed Orientalism as his father; as if the people were made to obey and he born to rule them as he chose.

National assemblies had in earlier times been held on all great public occasions, but latterly they had been confined to the accession of a king. Such a parliament of the ten northern tribes was now convened, presumably by the elders of each; not, however, at Jerusalem, as might have been expected, but in their own territory, at Shechem.³ Rehoboam must come to them, not they to him. This itself was ominous, but he lived as yet in a fool's paradise, blind and deaf to what would have

¹ 1 Chron. xxviii. 1. 1 Kings i. 40, 45, 46.

² 1 Kings xii. 26. *Sept., Vat.*

³ Shechem, long the centre of Israelitish life in Palestine under Abraham and Jacob, retained for ages traces of its ancient dignity, as Rheims, the old capital of France, continued to be the scene of coronations long after Paris had taken its place as the national capital.

arrested the deepest attention of a sensible ruler. Meanwhile there was no overt hint of disloyal intentions; they desired only some reforms which, as free men, they had a right to claim. Yet they based their demand for these on a ground unpalatable in the extreme to a king. Their obedience to him, they said, in effect, was conditional; it was free to them to serve him or not, as they chose; if he confirmed their old constitutional liberties, they would accept him; if not, they would withdraw from allegiance. He had fancied the spirit of the people so tamed and broken, that such language and bearing, where he had looked for trembling servility, only infuriated him and roused his arbitrary self-will. "Thy father," said the elders through whom they addressed him, "oppressed us with his exactions and with the huge cost of his royal establishments.¹ Make this grievous service² and heavy yoke lighter, and we will serve thee."

Not unnaturally, three days' delay were demanded by Rehoboam before he gave his answer. However willing to make a just concession, his dignity required him to do it as became a king. Had he been equal to the occasion, the future of Israel might have been different. But a revolution was inevitable. "The king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord."³ Instinctively turning to the venerable men who had stood before his father, men thoughtful and experienced, they gave him advice which, had it been taken, might have averted the catastrophe. Gentle words, they said, and

¹ Sept., "Made the meats of his table grievous to us." Kings xii. 24.

² The Hebrew word used here is translated elsewhere "bondage," "servitude," "servile work." Exod. vi. 6. Num. xxviii. 18. Neh. v. 18. Isa. xiv. 3. 2 Chron. x. 4, etc.

³ 1 Kings xii. 15.

timely concessions, would bind the tribes to him for ever. But it is hard for a despot to humble himself. Was there no way of meeting the difficulty more flattering to his pride? A younger generation of courtiers had grown up around him; he would ask them. In their light insolence, however, they had no idea but coercion. Who were they who dared oppose the will of a king? Rehoboam should treat them as slaves, and tell them that, instead of lessening their burdens, he would increase them. His little finger should be thicker than his father's loins; instead of using common whips on them, like Solomon's taskmasters, he should see that they were driven to their work with knotted scourges! ¹

It was enough! There was a leader among the tribes who knew how to profit by the emergency. Jeroboam had returned from Egypt to Palestine, on hearing of the death of Solomon, and was present at Shechem, as the chief spokesman for the assembly. The year since the great king's death had no doubt been diligently used by him in secret preparation for the crisis that had now arrived. The word of Ahijah the prophet, assuring him of the throne of the Ten Tribes, had not been forgotten, nor had any step been neglected to secure its fulfilment. The third day brought the haughty and insolent answer he had no doubt expected. Forthwith the matter was decided. The terrible cry was instantly heard which, in David's time, under Sheba,² had already well-nigh anticipated the secession now to be carried out.

"What portion have we in David?
What inheritance in Jesse's son?"

¹ 1 Kings xii. 11. Scorpions. The Romans called a whip tipped with sharp points of metal, a scorpion.

² 2 Sam. xx. 2.

To your tents, O Israel!¹

Now take care of your own house, O David!"

The work of two generations was undone in a moment! Loyal to David himself, the tribes at large had been alienated by the gross tyranny and selfish extravagance of Solomon's reign; the immunities granted to Judah had rekindled old jealousies, and a fierce passion for liberty had been roused, before which resistance was vain. Rehoboam, appalled, hardly knew what to do. Trying concession when too late, he sent the aged Adoniram to them to propose reforms. But he could not have chosen a worse representative than one who had been chief task-master in the odious past. A shower of stones greeted his appearance, and in a few moments he lay dying. His fate was a protest that they had struck for freedom, and that their slavery was ended. Terrified for his own life, the king hastily mounted his chariot and fled to Jerusalem, never to see Shechem again. The assembled tribes forthwith elected Jeroboam as king.

For the moment it must have seemed as if the House of David had lost everything. The sceptre left it was that only of a single tribe, with insignificant dependencies. From almost within sight of Jerusalem on the north, to the valley of the Orontes; from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, all else had passed into the hands of one whom Solomon had first raised from obscurity. Judah, Rehoboam's own tribe, on its barren hills, alone remained faithful to him. The boundaries of the tribes generally

¹ This reference to tents ages after the nation had abandoned nomadic life, points it may be to the continuance among them to a large extent of the custom of living in tents in the hot summer, as is still largely done even by townspeople in Palestine. The tradition of their early tent life in the wilderness would be thus kept up. See *Land and Book*, p. 296.

called a whip

had, in the course of ages, become more or less changed. Jerusalem stood on the territory of Benjamin, and its population belonged in great measure to that tribe.¹ The southern part of it, therefore, adhered to Judah, as far as Mizpeh and Geba;² but the northern half, including the ancient and revered sanctuaries of Bethel, Ramah, Gilgal, and Jericho, remained, as heretofore, connected with the fortunes of Ephraim.³ Judah had already absorbed some part of Dan, for the villages of Zorah and Ajalon were reckoned hers,⁴ and thus a fragment of the territory of that tribe also, remained under Rehoboam. But the town of Dan in the far north was the capital of the tribe, and most of the clan would doubtless follow it in its adhesion to the northern confederacy. Simeon had never had any prominence in the nation, for its district lay in the thirsty Negeb, far below Hebron: a region of poor upland pastures, which had condemned it to the shepherd life of early ages. This tribe had tried to develop town life with its higher civilization, but even in the time of David had begun to abandon it again for the tent.⁵ Hence it naturally continued the connection with Judah, to which it had to look for protection from its powerful neighbours on all sides, and in which it was virtually lost.

¹ 1 Kings xii. 20. The *Sept.* adds, "and the tribe of Benjamin." That the Jerusalem population were mostly Benjamites follows from Jer. vi. 1. In Ezek. xxxvii. 16, by "the children of Israel" are meant Benjamites. As a tribe Benjamin was included in the northern kingdom under Ishbosheth (2 Sam. ii. 9), and it was no less so after that kingdom had fallen (Ps. lxxx. 2). The bitterest enemies of the house of David—Saul, Shimei and Sheba—were Benjamites. Yet part of the tribe clung to Rehoboam, apparently those in and round Jerusalem, as stated in the text. See 1 Kings xii. 21.

² 1 Kings xv. 22.

⁴ 2 Chron. xi. 10.

³ 1 Kings xii. 29; xv. 17; xvi. 34.

⁵ 1 Chron. iv. 31.

While the territory of Rehoboam could thus take the name of only one tribe, the northern confederacy, on the other hand, might well assume the proud title of "Israel," the father of the whole race, and boast that it was, in effect, the national kingdom. The claim was indeed virtually acknowledged by the general use of this lordly name henceforth. It was not applied to Judah till after the destruction of Samaria;¹ but from the first, even the prophets thus designated the northern kingdom. In later times, indeed, when idolatry had spread, they began to speak of Israel as Ephraim,² but rather from growing contempt for its apostasy than in denial of its rank, for, to the last, it is also spoken of as Jacob, Isaac, and Joseph.³ Its establishment is at all times recognised by them as part of the Divine economy, and its vicissitudes and revolutions, no less than the fortunes of Judah, are traced to the immediate control of Providence. Within its borders, with the exception of Jerusalem and Hebron, were all the sites dear to a Hebrew, east and west of the Jordan. A prophet had virtually inaugurated it, by Ahijah's designation of Jeroboam as its first king, and it became the special sphere of the activity of the order for centuries after its formal commencement. For though Judah, at least after Elijah and Elisha, had more prophets who are individually noticed in Scripture, it was in Israel only, so far as we know, that they were counted by 50, 100, or 400 at a time.⁴

The hope of the prophets that the reforms, so urgently demanded in the interests of religion and popular liberty,

¹ Zech. xii. 1.

² See Hos. and Zech. *passim*. Ps. lxxviii. 9. Isa. vii. 2; xi. 13; xxviii. 1, 3.

³ Amos iii. 13; vi. 8; vii. 2, 5, 9, 16. Hos. xii. 2. Amos vi. 6.

⁴ 1 Kings xviii. 13; xxii. 6. 2 Kings ii. 3, 5; iv. 38; i. 1; ix. 1.

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See 1 Kings

7; xvi. 34.

would be secured by the establishment of the northern kingdom, was doomed to disappointment. The limitation of the power of the throne within the ancient theocratic bounds had been expected; but instead of this, the monarchy soon became more arbitrary than before the secession. Having no adventitious support from the splendour of their own deeds or character; no borrowed lustre from a historical past; divorced from the people by their despotic rather than popular tendencies; placed, moreover, between Judah, hostile, on the south, and Syria on the north, the kings of Israel created a military monarchy; at once to repress revolution within, and guard the frontier from external attack. From the first, the soldier was the great power in the State; the chief of the army being even more powerful than in the undivided kingdom, when Joab could brave the anger of David himself. He stood next after the king, and was the recognised channel of royal favour.¹ In two cases, his great office enabled him to seize the throne itself.² There was no longer a pretence of relying, as of old, on infantry alone. Chariot squadrons and cavalry were now the main trust.³ Instead of the 600 braves of David, a favoured regiment of chariots was in immediate attendance on the king,⁴ each carrying a shield bearer, a driver, and the warrior himself.⁵ A body guard protected the palace and the royal person, at once securing the safety of the king and serving as his couriers and executioners.⁶ The special national weapon, however, was the bow,⁷ which was as famous in Israel as it used to be in

¹ 2 Kings iv. 13. ² 1 Kings xvi. 16. 2 Kings ix. 5.

³ 1 Kings xvi. 9. ⁴ Roskoff, art. *Kriegsherr*, Schenkel's *Lex.*

⁵ The *Shalishim*, or "three," translated "captains."

⁶ 2 Kings x. 25; ix. 25.

⁷ Ps. lxxviii. 9. 2 Kings ix. 24;

xiii. 15, 16.

medieval England, though the Hebrew archers differed from ours, by fighting from chariots as well as on foot.

The toleration of heathenism by Solomon had given great offence, and doubtless facilitated the secession. It was, in fact, the ground on which Ahijah had announced to Jeroboam that the rupture of the monarchy had been decreed by God.¹ Yet the kings of Israel, so far from adopting a policy of exclusiveness in favour of the old religion, not only tampered with it from the first, but maintained no precautions against the entrance of idolatry, and in not a few cases actively favoured it. The prophets, instead of being invited to counsel the throne, as Nathan and Gad had been, by David, were ignored or violently resisted. Unrestrained by the checks still felt in Judah, the kings made no pretence of acting under the laws of the theocracy, but were guided solely by their own ideas of policy. The conflict which Samuel had maintained with Saul was recommenced, therefore, almost at once, between his successors and the kings of Israel, constant revolutions being the result. Nor did it ever cease. For more than 250 years before the fall of the kingdom, there was a life and death struggle between the throne and the prophets, who, having, under God, founded the monarchy, fought nobly to guide it in the right path. Dynasties rose and fell at short intervals; most of them in the second generation; only one surviving till the fifth. The succession became, in fact, elective rather than hereditary, with all the evils of that system. Denunciation by a prophet was fatal to a royal house; another rose at his word, in its place. But, in spite of this, things drifted, ever, from bad to worse.

Shut out from the culture and spiritual elevation, slowly attained in the south, under Samuel, David, and

¹ 1 Kings xi. 33.

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Solomon, the new kingdom suffered greatly from the loss of such healthful and ennobling influences. Soon after its erection, moreover, it received a heavy blow in the withdrawal of the priests and Levites to Jerusalem. To them in great measure was confined the education and refinement of the community. They were the representatives of art, law, religion, and general knowledge. The institution of the calf worship of Bethel and Dan, instead of the homage to the Unseen which obtained in Jerusalem, was a fatal error; induced partly by jealousy of the South, partly by unworthy concession to the popular tastes. The nation not only lost the elevating and strengthening influences of a spiritual faith, but was henceforth unable to resist the advance of heathenism, far less to overcome it. Having sanctioned it in a measure, nothing could prevent it flooding in ever more strongly from Phenicia and Syria, with which the whole country was in the closest intercourse, through commerce and otherwise. The confusion of the old days of the Judges returned in a great degree by constant political revolutions; popular ignorance and superstition grew apace where all was unsettled; idolatry gradually took deep and wide root, and with it an immorality fatal to any people. Great prophets rose, and able kings, but they could not stay the downward progress of the nation, and it had at last to be left, by its best citizens, to sink into the ruin they could not avert.

The earlier history of the southern kingdom was very different. Small and weak, with all the evil tendencies which had led to the great secession, it yet retained not a few advantages secured under David and Solomon. The very traditions of these reigns was a priceless treasure. The kingdom was virtually a continuation of the glorious past, based on the same fundamental principles. The king ruled, not under, but with the prophets and

people, maintaining his dignity, but respecting public opinion and prophetic counsel; following, in fact, while appearing to lead; as in healthy governments in all ages. The splendour of the first two reigns, moreover, had surrounded the throne with a halo that kept the nation loyal to the line of David for 500 years. During that long period the succession was undisputed, and the dynasty was at last overthrown only by foreign invasion. The ideal of kingly excellence in the inspired writings of David and Solomon, and the grand loyalty of the former to his obligations as the ruler of a theocracy, were a standard for their posterity; restraining the weak or unworthy, and guiding the reforms and action of the true-hearted. The golden age, when David reigned and Nathan and Gad stood at his side, rose abidingly before the imagination of future kings and generations. Hence public affairs were much more settled and peaceful than in the northern kingdom. Troubles might rise, but they did not shake the throne. In spite of its weakness, Judah could sustain itself a hundred years after its more powerful rival had fallen.

The secret of this tenacious national life was its comparative purity. Heathenism was kept far longer at bay than in Israel, and when at any time it threatened to root itself in the land, it was cast out by an earnest and vigorous reaction. The idolatry introduced by Solomon was banished after a few decades; and when, at a later date, under Athaliah and Ahaz, it was once more thrust on the people, they united against it, with a new king at their head, and triumphantly restored the hereditary worship of Jehovah. The fatal strife between prophets and kings was thus avoided. Freer to utter their warnings and counsels than in Israel, these fearless witnesses for God kept alive the old faith, and with it the spiritual

life of the nation. Nor did their work end with their life. How much does mankind owe to their inspired utterances preserved in the canon of Scripture !

Yet heathenism pressed ever closer. Its rigid exclusion, however essential, was in the end impossible. Contact with idolatrous nations ; the presence of an active pro-heathen party, dating from the fatal error of Solomon ; the influence, too often, of a pro-heathen king and court ; the tendency of baser natures to turn to any sensuous worship, beat back the ancient faith from its old supremacy, and slowly sapped its vigour. The increasing influence of Assyria and Babylon, as time passed on, strengthened this heathen element, till it became dominant. Alliances with idolatrous empires, and imitation of their example, at once threw the ancient faith into the shade, and showed in the decay of national worth their appropriate fruits. Even what orthodoxy survived was blighted. Under a cold and worldly priesthood favoured by the court, a superstitious ceremonial and dead ecclesiasticism gradually threw the people into spiritual sleep, in spite of the watchful and earnest care of the prophets and of the remnant of noble souls.¹

Meanwhile the throne became steadily more unlike the grand ancient ideal, and the contrast helped to undermine it. A mad determination to throw itself into the high politics of the day, and take part in the conflicts of mighty empires, completed its ruin. With it sank all that survived of the purer elements of national life. But the work of the prophets was seen in the clinging vitality with which these emerged from the catastrophe, while still in exile, making a return from Babylon possible, and securing the resurrection of Judaism, free from every trace of heathen influence.

¹ Isa. i. 13 ff. Jer. vii. Amos v. 21.

Jeroboam might well be proud of his kingdom when elected to it by the national assembly at Shechem. Instead of the stony hills of Judea, he had for his realm the fertile valleys and wooded heights of Central Palestine, the great plain of Esdraelon, the rich highland district of Upper Galilee, the forests and meadows of Gilead and Bashan, and the wide pastoral uplands of Gad and Reuben. If the southern part of the Philistine plain and the mountains of Edom, with their facilities for commerce from Ezion-geber on the Red Sea, remained under Rehoboam, his rival could boast of receiving tribute from half of Philistia and the rich countries of Ammon and Moab. Syria, as far as the Euphrates, formerly part of Solomon's empire, was already virtually independent. A portion of it, indeed, forming the kingdom of Damascus, had already, as we have seen, given Solomon trouble, under Rezon or Hezion, an officer of the defeated king of Zobah, and was destined, under Tabrimmon,¹ his grandson, and its future kings, to be a hereditary and deadly enemy of Israel for centuries. Gradually conquering the other Aramaic lands on this side of the Euphrates, it could at last, in the reign of Ahab, assemble thirty-two vassal princes to fight under its standard against him.² Hence Rehoboam seems to have maintained friendly relations with it,³ to embarrass Jeroboam; but the astute northern ruler more than compensated himself for this stroke of policy by securing the active support of his father-in-law, the king of Egypt, against the southern kingdom.

The first impulse of Rehoboam had been to try to win

¹ 1 Kings xv. 18—"Rimmon" (or "Rammon," the Assyrian), "is good." "Sun god, the judge of heaven and earth," etc. (*Black obelisk of Shalmaneser*.)

² 1 Kings xx. 1.

³ *Grætz*.

back the ten tribes by force of arms, and for this purpose he called out the whole levy of his kingdom, amounting to 180,000 men; but the project was laid aside in obedience to a Divine warning given through the prophet Shemaiah.¹ It was impossible, however, to prevent border feuds and petty warfare, which lasted throughout his whole reign, and that of his son.² Dissuaded from aggressive hostilities on a great scale, and dreading attacks from Jeroboam's Egyptian ally, or from the Philistines, who might now trouble him in his weakness, he resolved to protect the approaches to Jerusalem by a series of fifteen forts on the south, south-west, and west. Bethlehem and Tekoa, 5 miles south of it; Etham, 7 miles to the south-east of it, near Solomon's famous gardens; Socho, 18 miles south-west of the capital; Adullam, 5 miles nearer it; Bethzur, 17 miles from it, on the Hebron road; Gath, in the Philistine plains, 7 miles west of Socho; Maresha, among the hills, 6 miles south-east of Gath; Ziph, 4 miles south of Hebron, and Hebron itself; Adoraim, 5 miles west of Hebron; Lachish, 9 miles west of Adoraim, were all made defensible, evidently in anticipation of an attack from Egypt; while Azekah, Zorah, and Ajalon, at the head of the passes from the maritime plains, in the west, were likewise stockaded. The whole were, moreover, provisioned and garrisoned. The king took also the prudent step of withdrawing a number of his sons, of whom he had twenty-eight, from the temptations of idle life at Jerusalem, and setting them over these strong posts;³ Abijah, the son of his favourite wife, Maachah, a daughter of his uncle Absalom, being at the same time raised to the oversight of the

¹ 1 Kings xii. 21-24.

² 1 Kings xiv. 30; xv. 6, 7.

³ 2 Chron. xi. 5, 23. The distances in the text are from Kiepert's Map.

whole royal family. The fatal error of polygamy still, however, clung to the shrunken monarchy, for not only had Rehoboam himself eighteen wives and sixty concubines, but a harem was created for each of his sons.¹

Meanwhile, Jeroboam made Shechem his capital, and fortified it strongly, in keeping with his character as a great builder. No spot could have been more delightful for a royal residence, and it was, besides, not only the chief town of Ephraim, but the most ancient sanctuary of Israel in Palestine. Abraham himself had raised an altar in its valley; Jacob had bought land and dug his famous well in it; it contained Joseph's grave; and Joshua had caused the blessings and curses of the Law to be read from Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, on its northern and southern sides. But the Shechemites, from Jacob's day, had borne a doubtful name. They had long ago crowned Abimelech, and then turned against him; and now, it would seem, after hailing Jeroboam as their king, they early gave him trouble. Leaving a spot so unquiet, therefore, he first crossed to Penuel,² near the Jabbok, beyond Jordan,—another ancient sanctuary of the race, famous in the history of Jacob,—and made it a second capital; perhaps to keep his hold on Moab and Ammon. But he soon forsook this also for Tirzah,³ apparently the present village Teiasar, charmingly seated among the rich green hills, six miles east of Samaria. The height on which it stood he, at once, strongly fortified, and built a city, with a royal palace and other buildings and mansions, on so grand a scale, that the splendour of the whole vied with that of Jerusalem.⁴ There had been an old Canaanite town on the hill, but

¹ 2 Chron. xi. 18-23. ² Gen. xxxii. 30. ³ 1 Kings xv. 33.

⁴ "Beautiful as Tirzah," Cant. vi. 4. Jerusalem is spoken of also beautiful, but only after Tirzah.

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it had fallen in Joshua's invasion,¹ and is not mentioned again till Jeroboam made it his capital. This honour it retained through the remainder of his reign, and under Baasha, Elah, and Zimri; only losing it on Omri's founding Samaria. Jeroboam was buried at Tirzah, and so probably were the next three kings.

The separation of Israel from Judah had at first been merely political; the religious unity of the nation was as yet unbroken. But in this, as it seemed to Jeroboam, lay serious risk to himself and his house. The priests and Levites throughout his dominions would doubtless, as a rule, be loyal to their ecclesiastical centre in the south, and might thus exert a very dangerous influence. Indeed, the popularity of Jerusalem with the better class of the nation, was already a sign of their deep disappointment with the new kingdom, which had proved so doubtful an exchange for that which they had forsaken.² The people, moreover, still regarded the temple as their national sanctuary, and flocked to it in great numbers at the yearly festivals, and they might, through this, be turned again, after a time, to the House of David. The only remedy, as it seemed to Jeroboam, was to establish local religious centres in his own territories, as in the time of the Judges, and this he proceeded to do at once. The nation in those wild bygone days had worshipped Jehovah under external symbols, and would doubtless do so again. He had been accustomed, besides, to the worship of the sacred ox Apis, or the calf Mnevis, in Egypt, and his queen was an Egyptian. Still more; over all Western Asia, including the heathen parts of Palestine, the ox was the favourite symbol of Baal, and as such Israel was already accustomed to it. He caused two golden calves, or young oxen, therefore,

¹ Josh. xii. 24.

² 1 Kings xii. 26. 2 Chron. xi. 16.

to be set up at the north and south of the land, proclaiming them to be emblems of Jehovah. It was a repetition of the apostasy of the golden calf at Sinai. The idea, in fact, was evidently taken from that fatal incident, for the same words were used in the inauguration of the worship: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."¹ The sites selected for the new worship were wisely chosen: Bethel, an ancient sanctuary, hallowed by memories of Abraham and Jacob; and Dan, on the north, the seat of a local worship, at least from the days of Micah. Indeed, both places had apparently been regarded as sacred by the Canaanites from the remote past. This striking religious reaction proved successful in the highest degree, for all Israel, "as one man,"² resorted to Bethel and Dan. Naturally, however, it was abhorrent to the priests and Levites scattered through Israel; nor would they have anything to do with it. Leaving their pasture grounds and their homes in the various Levitical cities, they streamed over the southern border, strengthening the kingdom of Judah and weakening its rival.³ To supply their places, men from all classes⁴ were consecrated to the sacred

¹ Exod. xxxii. 4. As the symbol of the god who had brought them out of Egypt, the calf could not have represented Apis or Mnevis, Egyptian gods. As such, these would have kept the Israelites from escaping; for Egyptian gods, of course, would act for Egypt, not against it. It must, therefore, have represented the Asiatic ox-headed god, which would naturally injure Egypt, and help Israel, an Asiatic people.

² 1 Kings xii. 30. *Ewald's translation*, vol. iii. p. 472.

³ They were not allowed, it is said, to "execute the priest's office to Jehovah;" but this must mean, to execute it in the only lawful way, without an image. Otherwise they might have continued at Bethel and Dan. 2 Chron. xi. 14.

⁴ 1 Kings xii. 31. "Of the lowest" = "of all classes."

offices. But the golden calves were only a part of the new system. Worship on "high places" had for ages been universal in Western Asia. On the Euphrates lofty towers had been erected, that altars might be raised on their summits, and many of the hills of Palestine had in the same way been consecrated to religious worship. The universal worship of the sun had, doubtless, as has been already said, led to this custom, such spots as were most exposed to his rays being selected for religious uses. From the nations around, the practice had passed to the Hebrews, and had become so cherished and dear to them by the usage of centuries, that it survived the building of the temple, and was nominally abolished only by the vigorous action of Josiah, just before the downfall of Judah. Altars were raised alongside the calves at Bethel and Dan. With that of Bethel was connected a new temple, known for centuries as the royal and national sanctuary, a rival of the great temple of Jerusalem; with a distinct priesthood, ritual and festivals, and all the pomp of the religious centre of the kingdom.¹ Thence-

¹ Amos vii. 13. *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 473. There was a double motive in Jeroboam's selection of Bethel. It lay on a hill which formed a natural border fortress, defended by the gorge of the Wady Suweinit—the pass from Jericho—on the south. Luz, a Canaanite town on the same height, had, at the conquest, repelled the invaders on their first attack, and only yielded afterwards to the combined force of Benjamin and Ephraim (Judges i. 22-25). It was also a very sacred place in the eyes of the whole nation. The Beth-el, or House of God, erected on it by Jacob, was probably some rude cromlech or altar of unhewn stones, but it was the primitive sanctuary of the race, after Shechem. Jeroboam's new temple would, we may well imagine, exhibit some of the splendour of the temples of Egypt with which he was familiar. It had, we know, "a high priest," and the "noise of songs" and "the melody of viols," and "burnt offerings and meat offerings," and "feast days" and "solemn assemblies." It was known,

forward, public prayer was to be made and sacrifices and burning of incense offered there rather than at Jerusalem. Nor was this all. Eager to seduce the people from Judah and win them to the new system, he pandered with an utter unscrupulousness to their worst superstitions, and erected altars to the demons of the desert, which had always been an object of popular terror.¹ The first step of introducing the calves had opened the way to an indefinite progress towards heathenism. Ere long even Asherahs were tolerated in Israel.²

The inauguration of the new religion, we may readily believe, was made a great state ceremonial, like the bringing of the Sacred Ark by David to Jerusalem, or the dedication of the temple by Solomon. It was determined also to establish a great religious feast as a counter-attraction to that of Tabernacles at Jerusalem, but held a month later; the first celebration being appointed for the time of the opening ceremonies. Henceforth, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, instead of the fifteenth day of the seventh month, was to be the great Harvest Home of Israel. As to the Passover and Pentecost, celebrating the Exodus and the wheat harvest, moreover, as "the king's sanctuary"* and "the king's house" stood near it (Amos vii. 13).

¹ "Devils." 2 Chron. xi. 15; in Isa. xiii. 21; xxxiv. 14, translated "satyræ." The word comes from the verb "to fear," "to dread." In all Western Asia it was thought that hairy demons, like a goat, haunted lonely places, to spring out on unwary travellers. Lenormant, *La Magique*, p. 29. See also *Annals of Assurbanipal*. Smith and Lenormant. Rich, quoted by Gesenius, *Isaia*, p. 466, says: "I find the belief in such demons common among the ruins of Babylon." Indeed, among what people, ancient or modern, is there not more or less superstitious fear connected with lonely desolation, especially by night?

² 1 Kings xiv. 15.

* Royal temple. Pusey. National temple. Kuenen.

they were from this time to fall into disuse; but the Passover, at least, never did so, and proved a strong link in after times between the North and South, in spite of Jeroboam's astuteness. As yet, however, notwithstanding the introduction of the symbolism of the calves, the worship of Jehovah was apparently much more strict in Israel than under the loose sanction of heathenism by Rehoboam in Judah. There was, nevertheless, a greater danger of future idolatry. The calf worship mixed a gross element, capable of indefinite abuse, with the spiritual ideas of the old faith, whereas the very foulness of heathenism in Judah secured its future expulsion, by the contrast it offered to the temple worship. Symbolism was a direct step towards idolatry, and thus prepared the way for its full introduction, and the ruin of the nation.

Naturally, therefore, the first momentous step, so pregnant with future evil, at once roused the zeal of the prophets. They rightly saw in it a surrender of that spiritual conception of God which had been slowly built up in the popular mind from the days of Samuel. Their sorrow and anger were the keener, from their having favoured the rending of the kingdom, in the hope of restoring religion to a higher position than it had latterly held under Solomon. As Jeroboam proceeded, moreover, in his course, with increasing recklessness, their opposition became stronger, till open resistance broke out between them and the king, to be continued henceforth, under his successors, while the monarchy survived.

On the set day, Jeroboam, usurping the function of high priest, had approached the altar on the hill of Bethel, to inaugurate the new worship by burning incense, when suddenly an unknown prophet from Judah appeared, denouncing the innovations, and predicting the birth of a prince of the line of David, who would offer

on the altar thus set up, the bones of the priests who had ministered before it. As a sign that he spoke with Divine authority, the altar was rent in two at his word, and the ashes of the sacrifices scattered. Furious at the interruption, and especially at its tenor, Jeroboam would fain have seized the daring intruder; but his arm, we are told, was withered as he sought to lay hold on him, and was only healed at the prophet's intercession. Disappearing as suddenly as he came, after refusing the king's hospitality, as that offered by an idolater in a polluted land, the messenger, in his own fate illustrated the terrible exactness of obedience demanded by Divine commands. Persuaded against his better judgment, by one who certainly meant him no harm, but failed to realize the obligation imposed on him, he unthinkingly disobeyed in an apparently innocent particular, the directions given him, and perished as the result of his waywardness. He had brought on himself the curse denounced against the country at large for its apostasy.¹ An incident so sad lingered long in the popular memory. By those loyal to Jehovah, the altar was deemed permanently accursed. It had been rent in two on the day of its inauguration; it was again torn asunder by an earthquake in the days of Amos, nearly 200 years later;² and at last, when the northern kingdom had fallen, Josiah, after burning the high place and a lewd Asherah image near at hand, overthrew the whole structure; grinding its very stones to dust, and burning on them, as the uttermost defilement, the bones of the priests, once its ministers, but long ago laid to rest in the rock-hewn graves of the valley beneath.³ The spot where the prophet—perhaps Iddo—met his death, was also kept in popular remembrance,

¹ 1 Kings xiii. 1-32.² Amos ix. 1.³ 2 Kings xxiii. 15, 16.

for even in Josiah's day his tombstone was yet pointed out.¹

Such an outrage on the sacred theocratic constitution, under which alone Jeroboam held his throne, was a virtual defiance of the prophets, its faithful representatives, and at once roused their fiercest denunciations. Few incidents are recorded; nor do we know the steps of the high controversy, which speedily ended in the final and complete rupture between the king and "the men



A VEILED WOMAN.

of God." But one which happened after the capital had been removed to Tirzah, illustrates the relations that soon prevailed between them. Abijah, the heir to the kingdom, had fallen sick amidst the vines and olive gardens, and umbrageous "paradises" of the new royal abode. Tenderly fond of him,

Jeroboam yearned to know whether he would recover, and determined to apply to the prophet Ahijah, at Shiloh, who had first told him he should be king. His wife, the Egyptian princess, with a mother's eagerness, resolved to be the messenger; but knowing how matters stood between Ahijah and her husband, she thought it best to disguise herself before setting out. Taking with her, therefore, as the customary present on con-

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 17, 18.

sulting the prophet, only a simple gift becoming a poor woman, of ten loaves, some buns,¹ or raisin cakes, and a jar of dibs, she set out for Shiloh, about eighteen miles south from Tirzah, over the hills. But Ahijah, now old and blind, had been divinely warned beforehand of her approach, and greeted her at once, on her entrance, as the wife of Jeroboam. Then followed an interview sad in the extreme. Her visit, he told her, was useless, and her gift could not be accepted. He would have nothing to do with her husband, but stood aloof from him, as one who had violated the condition on which he had been raised to the throne. Instead of doing only what was right in the eyes of Jehovah, he had exceeded all before him in wickedness, by worshipping the invisible God under the symbol of an ox that eateth grass.² The royal house was irrevocably doomed. Every male belonging to it should die. The boy for whom she inquired so earnestly would alone escape the calamities of his family, by dying before they came. He would pass away as she re-entered Tirzah. "All Israel, however, would mourn for him; for he only of Jeroboam would come to the grave, because in him alone there was found some good thing towards Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam."³

Meanwhile Rehoboam, in the southern kingdom, apparently sobered by his misfortunes, had for three years⁴ acted loyally as a theocratic king. But it is hard to turn out of a false course. Trained by an idolatrous mother, the master of a harem which perhaps included heathen princesses, and inheriting the results of the introduction

¹ The *Sept.* adds, "for the children." 1 Kings xiv. 3.

² Ps. cvi. 20.

³ 1 Kings xiv. 13.

⁴ 2 Chron. xi. 17.

of idolatry into Jerusalem by his father, he soon gave himself up to it, and broke away from the old religion.¹ Additional high places for idols were built; symbolic pillars were raised to Baal, and Asherahs to the lewd goddess of fertility, "on every high hill and under every green tree." Heathenism in its worst characteristics was let loose on the land. Male and female temple-prostitutes were tolerated, to swell the revenues of the idol priests.² But Providence had its terrible retribution in store. Stirred up, doubtless, as already said, by his son-in-law, Jeroboam—Shishak, or Sesonchis, one of the kings of Egypt of the intruding Assyrian dynasty,³ invaded Judah in the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, with 1,200 chariots, 60,000 cavalry, and a huge army of Libyans, Ethiopian cave-men,⁴ and Nubians, and easily breaking through the circle of outlying posts, appeared under the walls of Jerusalem, which only escaped formal surrender by submitting to the most humiliating conditions. The vast wealth of gifts stored in the temple, the famous gold shields taken from Syria by David, those made by Solomon for his body guard, and all the treasures of the king's palace, were exacted by the invader as the ransom of the city, and Rehoboam was virtually reduced to the position of a vassal of Egypt.⁵ So hopelessly had the division of the kingdom destroyed the glory of the days of Solomon. Israel was once more threatened with an Egyptian bondage.

An interesting memorial of this great disaster may still be seen on the walls of a small temple built by Rameses

¹ 2 Chron. xii. 1, 14.

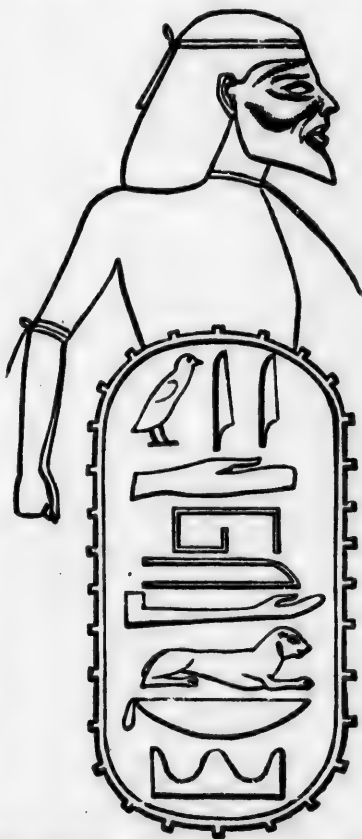
² 1 Kings xiv. 22-24.

³ *Brugsch*, vol. ii. pp. 198-212.

⁴ *Mühlau und Volck*, on word Sukkiim.

⁵ 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26. 2 Chron. xii. 2-9. From ver. 8 it follows that Judea henceforth, for a time at least, paid tribute to Egypt.

III., on the south side of the great temple of Karnac, at Thebes. The smaller building was finished by Shishak himself, after his victory over Rehoboam. Its walls are covered inside and out with sculptures, amongst which occurs the only direct and indisputable reference to Jewish history found on the monuments of Egypt. In one part the king, drawn on a gigantic scale, stands holding in his hands a train of prisoners, while the god Amon comes to meet him with another file of captives led by cords tied round their necks, the ends held in his hand. The figures, eleven in number, are of half length, terminating in shields, on which are painted the names of the cities taken from Judah. It was formerly thought that one of these figures bore the name of the Jewish king himself, but the inscriptions on all prove to be only a list of captured towns, some of them those which Rehoboam had so carefully fortified.¹



COMMEMORATION OF THE CONQUEST OF "THE ROYAL CITY OF JUDAH," THAT IS JERUSALEM, BY SHISHAK. From the Portico at Karnac.

Canon Rawlinson thinks the profile is that of Rehoboam himself. *Bib. Educator*, vol. i. p. 106.

¹ Some of the towns on the list are, naturally, in Judah, but

A pompous hieroglyphic inscription proclaims the praise of Amon for having subdued the nations of the south



PRISONERS LED OFF BY AN EGYPTIAN ARMY.

and north before him, so that their kings had cast themselves on the earth at his feet. The marriage of Solomon with the Egyptian princess had been of no avail to secure lasting peace with the Pharaohs. The very palace he had built for her in Jerusalem was now plundered, five years after his death, by an Egyptian king, her relation.

The greatness of Israel had thus faded like a short-

several are in the territory of the Ten Tribes, which Shishak might have been expected to spare, since Jeroboam was his ally and friend. But these towns prove to have been either Levitical or Canaanite, and it would seem from this that Jeroboam did not get quiet possession of all his future kingdom. The Levites appear to have held to Rehoboam (2 Chron. xi. 13), and the remnant of the Canaanites probably made a last struggle for independence.

Against these two classes of towns, therefore, in Northern

Israel, Shishak directed his arms, handing them over to Jeroboam when he had taken them. Rawlinson's *Hist. Illust. of Scrip.*, p. 109.

lived dream. The Philistines and Edomites doubtless took advantage of Rehoboam's weakness to regain their independence. Hadad of Idumea, no less than Jeroboam, was supported by Shishak. But with the loss of Edom the rich sea-trade to Ophir was at once closed, for there was no longer access to the port at Ezion-geber. The greatest source of revenue was thus cut off. Nor was the situation more cheering in other directions. The trade in horses and chariots carried on between Egypt and the Euphrates could not be continued; the revolt of the ten tribes and the independence of Damascus, having closed the caravan routes to the north. The poverty of the land, as compared with its wealth under Solomon, was unconsciously proclaimed by Rehoboam himself. The golden shields of his guard having gone to enrich the Pharaoh, he had to content himself with others of brass,¹ which, in his



PHAROH LED OFF BY AN EGYPTIAN ARMY.

¹ 1 Kings xiv. 27.

vanity, were borne before him by his guards, as if things were unchanged from his father's days.¹

Seventeen years of this tinsel sovereignty passed away, before Rehoboam, at the age of fifty-eight, found a dignified rest in the royal tomb in the City of David, beside his great ancestors.² But his death brought no advantage to Judah. His successor, Abijah, was the son of Absalom's daughter, Maachah, Rehoboam's favourite wife.³ More warlike than his father, he took up the feud between North and South, and kindled it into new fierceness by a bloody war, to the grievous injury of both kingdoms. What could be hoped for the nation if its two sections, by weakening each other, made both an easy prey to the common enemies round? Abijah's short reign of three years was spent in a bitter struggle with Jeroboam, resulting in the capture of Bethel, and the two small towns of Jeshanah and Ephraim, or Ophrah, in its vicinity. Had he at once destroyed the calf temple at the former, some good might have followed. As it was, Bethel before long fell again into the hands of Israel. There was, indeed, a momentary flicker of brighter light in the position of Judah, but it was only passing. All the elements of decay were still at work. Abijah formed an alliance with Damascus to paralyse Jeroboam by threatening his rear; but to seek the help of a State which had lately been a vassal of Solomon was itself a profound humiliation. Such a power, moreover, was naturally the common enemy of both Judah and Israel, equally ready to help either, with the sole aim of weakening the other, and thus in the end overpowering both. The evils of polygamy in the palace still continued, for Abijah had fourteen wives and thirty-eight sons and daughters.⁴

¹ *Bib. Lea.*, vol. v. p. 53.

² 1 Kings xv. 1-8.

³ 1 Kings xiv. 31.

⁴ 2 Chron. xiii. 21.

Nor was there any repression of the heathen abuses¹ introduced by Solomon, and increased under Rehoboam. The worst evils threatened the nation through the weakness and guilt of their princes. The mass of the people might as yet be loyal to Jehovah,² thanks to the lingering influence of David,³ but the poison was slowly working which would in the end ruin all.

Abijah was succeeded by his son, or as some think it should be, his brother, Asa,⁴ who proved a much worthier king. Jeroboam had still two years to live, but had been weakened by Abijah, and was not in a condition to trouble Judah any longer. Nothing is told us respecting his death, except that he was buried honourably in the royal sepulchre, doubtless at Tirzah. But

"The evil that men do lives after them ;

The good is oft interred with their bones."

His strong character determined the whole future of Israel. He had made it a military monarchy, and such it continued. For political ends he had reintroduced the use of symbols into the worship of Jehovah, and thus entered on a course which ended in the formal establishment of heathenism by Omri and Ahab. However little, therefore, he may have intended to promote idolatry, the terrible indictment was rightly associated thenceforth for ever with his name, of having caused Israel to sin.

The instability and hollowness of Jeroboam's position was seen at once on his death. His firm hand had been

¹ 1 Kings xv. 3.

² 2 Chron. xii. 12.

³ 1 Kings xv. 4.

⁴ In 2 Chron. xv. 16, Maachah, the mother of Abijah, is said to have been the mother of Asa also. Graetz thinks it should be "brother;" others, that for "mother" we should read "grand-mother." Yet Maachah is said to have been "queen mother," that is, reigning mother of the king, under Asa, and this she could not have been as his grandmother. His own mother would in that case have been named.

able to suppress all open disaffection while he lived, but he had sown the wind, and his son Nadab reaped the whirlwind. Chagrin at the sinking glory of the nation, intensified by the victory of Judah in late years; the necessity of relying on the army, in a kingdom which had no prescription from the past; the difficulty of acting where the situation was in all respects so new, had doubtless disquieted the whole life of Jeroboam. Upheld by the soldiery, the throne was necessarily at its mercy, and this was felt in the camp. The king for the hour, was, in fact, only the elected of the troops, like the Roman emperors in the worst times. The people had no longer any political rights. Two years sufficed to bring all these seething elements of revolt to a head. Nadab had undertaken the siege of the Levitical town of Gibbethon, west of Tibneh, on the hills above the Philistine plain, in a line with Jerusalem, and things had not apparently prospered under him. This was enough. Discontent in the camp found expression in a successful military conspiracy headed by Baasha, a man of Issachar, one of Nadab's officers, who, after murdering him, ascended his throne. The curse pronounced on the house of Jeroboam by Ahijah of Shiloh now, at last, fell on it suddenly. To secure his position, Baasha, like Oriental kings generally, ordered the execution of every male of the fallen dynasty, and they were exterminated forthwith; some in Tirzah, where they were left lying in their blood in the streets, for the town dogs to eat; some in the country, where they were allowed in uttermost ignominy to remain unburied, the foul vultures gorging themselves on their corpses.¹ So perished the house of Jeroboam after a tenure of the throne for twenty-four years.

¹ 1 Kings xiv. 11.



CHAPTER II.

ASA, JEHOSEPHAT, AND THE HOUSE OF OMRI.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

BAASHA,	B.C. 961-937.
ELAH,	" 937-935.
ZIMRI	(seven days).

KINGS OF JUDAH.

ASA,	B.C. 965-917.
JEHOSEPHAT,	" 917-893.

Civil war between

Tibni and OMRI, " 935-931.

OMRI, " 931-919.

AHAB, " 919-897.

ASA had been two years on the throne of Judah; Rehoboam had been dead for five years, and his son Abijah for two, when the conspiracy of Baasha swept away the house of Jeroboam, and the new dynasty seated itself in Tirzah. But the revolution had been the work of the army alone, without any action on the part of the people, and hence had no bearing, or very little, on the social prosperity of the country. The sunny hills of Israel still dropped sweet wine; the ploughman overtook the reaper, and the treading of the grapes was swiftly followed by the sowing of new harvests;¹ for the richness of the land had not as yet been neutralized by the degeneracy of the nation. What policy the adventurer who had grasped supreme power would adopt, was, however, all-important. Unfortunately for both

¹ Amos ix. 13.

North and South, the dream of Israel since the secession had been to conquer Judah and restore the ancient kingdom of Saul, as Ishbosheth had tried to do. For this, Shishak had been stirred up against Rehoboam, during whose reign much blood had flowed on both sides. Jeroboam, while pursuing the same dream, had closed his life in the shame of inglorious defeat at the hands of Abijah. Nadab's offence was his having failed to restore the honour of the army. Baasha had only one course open to him; to lead the soldiery, his masters, to victory. Hence the long fratricidal war against Judah was continued, either in petty border feuds or in great campaigns, during his whole reign of twenty-four years;¹ making, in all, nearly fifty years of hostilities since the separation of the kingdoms.

One incident only of this fatal strife is recorded. Egypt threatened once more to invade the southern kingdom, perhaps at the instigation of Baasha, who, at the same time organized a grand invasion from the north. The only known result of this, however, was the capture of Ramah,² on the military and caravan road, six miles north of Jerusalem. This post he fortified strongly, to blockade Jerusalem, hoping thus to reduce it to submission by cutting it off from communication with the north, on which its food and general prosperity depended. In this extremity, Asa, forgetful of the assurance of Divine

¹ 1 Kings xv. 32.

² In 2 Chron. xvi. 1, this invasion of Baasha is said to have taken place in the thirty-sixth year of Asa. But Baasha died in Asa's twenty-sixth year. Thenius, Bertheau, and Ewald offer conjectural emendations of this date, but it is impossible to fix it with confidence. See *Thenius* on 1 Kings xv. 16. *Bertheau* on 2 Chron. xv. 19. *Ewald's Geschichte*, vol. iii. pp. 165, 186. *Art. Asa*, Schenkel's *Lea*.

protection, turned despairingly to the Syrian, Benhadad I. of Damascus, the successor of Rezon and Tabrimmon, whose kingdom was growing rapidly into great power. Collecting all the silver and gold left in the treasuries of the temple and palace, after the enormous ransom paid by Rehoboam to Shishak, he sent them as tribute to Benhadad, to purchase his support against Baasha. Only too glad to weaken the Hebrews, lately the lords of his country, Benhadad at once invaded Northern Israel, and ravaged the country on both sides of the Jordan, taking, among others, the towns of Ijon¹ in the central heights of Lebanon, Dan² and Abel-maim at the foot of Hermon, and most of those on the borders of the Sea of Galilee and throughout Naphtali.³ Attacked thus in his rear, Baasha was forced precipitately to abandon the blockade of Jerusalem, and march to the defence of his own dominions.⁴ The relief to Judah was immediate and complete, but it was dearly bought. Henceforth, till the rise of Assyria, the kings of Damascus were able to interfere in the internal affairs of each of the Jewish kingdoms by turns, to the great hurt of both. Asa had committed the great error, moreover, of forgetting his own words, "that it was nothing with God to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power,"⁵ and instead of trusting in Him, as he was hereafter to do in the Egyptian invasion, had sought aid from a heathen. Such a sin even in so good a man brought a deserved rebuke from the

¹ *Land and Book*, p. 223. Ijon gave its name to a plain 4,750 feet above the sea. This plain is eight to ten miles long and from three to four broad, embosomed among hills. It is one of the richest tracts in Syria, and even now is an unbroken expanse of wheat, beans and lentils in summer. It was at the very north of Naphtali. Oliphant, *Gilead*, p. 17.

² *Land and Book*, p. 250. ³ 1 Kings xv. 20. 2 Chron. xvi. 4.

⁴ 1 Kings xv. 18-21. 2 Chron. xvi. 5. ⁵ 2 Chron. xiv. 11.

prophet Jehu. "He had done foolishly. Henceforth he would have wars"—a prediction only too sadly fulfilled in the reigns of his successors.¹ But for the moment, the prophet paid the penalty of his boldness by being put in the stocks; even Asa finding it hard to realize at all times the prophetic ideal of absolute faith in God,² and, turning with ruffled pride against the true-hearted seer, who, with a noble jealousy of the honour of the fatherland and the true interests of the future, had denounced his action.

Hastily calling out the whole military levy of Judah, Asa took steps, without a moment's delay, to prevent the recurrence of the danger from which he had escaped. Razing to the ground the fortifications of Ramah, he built with their materials strong forts on the two hills, Geba and Mizpeh, commanding both sides of the Jerusalem road, a little nearer the city, and hewed out in them huge reservoirs for water, in case of a siege.³

Thus the reign of Baasha, like that of Jeroboam and Nadab, ended in military disgrace and dishonour, in spite of a vigour and capacity which enabled him to keep his seat on the throne till his death. He might have chosen the part of a true theocratic king, putting away the calf worship of Bethel and Dan, and loyally serving Jehovah, who had raised him "from the dust" to be king over His people. In that case the renewed moral strength of the nation would have brought lasting prosperity. But after murdering the family of Jeroboam, he had continued the offence of that prince, and thus drew down on his own posterity the same curse, which Jehu, the son of Hanani, a prophet, fearless like the rest of his

¹ The war with Baasha seems also to have continued for a time, since the "cities of Ephraim," taken by that monarch, 2 Chron. xvii. 2, can hardly refer to events before the destruction of Ramah.

² 2 Chron. xiv. 7-11.

³ Jer. xli. 9.

order, did not hesitate to pronounce. He himself, however, died in peace at Tirzah, and had honourable burial in the royal tombs.

Elah, his son, by his worthlessness, invited the doom which soon overtook his House. The times demanded a strong ruler, but he was only an enervated debauchee. Leaving his kingdom and his army to themselves, he stayed carousing at Tirzah. But hardly two years passed before his career was abruptly ended. The town of Gibbethon was again being besieged,¹ and there was once more treason in the camp. Baasha had been the general-in-chief. This time the traitor was Zimri, the commander of one of the two brigades of chariots. Driving off with sufficient force to Tirzah, he came on Elah while he was drinking deeply² in the house of his steward, Arza, and slew him. Then followed the common Eastern massacre of the family, including not only Elah's children, and his brothers and sisters, but all their kinsmen, and even their friends; only the queen and the ladies of the harem, apparently, being spared. But vengeance was soon on the track of the murderer. Zimri had usurped the throne without the sanction of the army, and this was bitterly resented. Choosing Omri, the general-in-chief, for king, the camp broke up the siege of Gibbethon, and, marching to Tirzah, invested it. The city itself was soon taken, but the palace still held out. Seeing its fate certain, however, Zimri determined to defraud his enemies, in a measure, of their triumph, by seeking his own death. Retiring to the "castle" or harem of the palace, the innermost building, presumably to revel for the last few moments of his life with its unfortunate inmates, he caused the whole palace to be set on fire, and perished, with his last victims amidst the flames.³

¹ P. 30. ² *Lit.* making himself "more drunk." ³ 1 Kings xvi. 18.

But Omri's victory was not yet secured. The people had hitherto taken no part in the frequent revolutions effected by the army. Now, however, a popular candidate for the throne appeared—Tibni, the son of Ginath, a man otherwise unknown, who was bravely supported by his brother Joram.¹ At last, to the evils of mere dynastic struggles were added those of civil war, for the nation was divided between the competitors for its sovereignty, and fought stoutly on both sides for four years. At length Omri prevailed, Tibni and his brother being slain,² and Omri became sole monarch of the desolated country.

Meanwhile, Asa was still reigning in Jerusalem with vigour and in a true theocratic spirit. The first ten years after his accession, though doubtless troubled by border feuds between his people and Israel, had been comparatively quiet.³ Reflecting the wishes of the best part of his subjects, he reversed the policy of the preceding kings, and took for his ideal his great ancestor, David. Setting his face earnestly against heathenism, he destroyed the idol altars which had been raised by those before him; levelled the high places;⁴ broke down the symbolic Baal-pillars; cut down the Asherahs, and removed the "sun images" made by his father throughout the kingdom; at the same time officially restoring the exclusive worship of Jehovah.⁵ Public opinion supported him in this enforced reformation, which was effected without opposition.⁶ Things had indeed come to a sad state. Maachah, the queen mother, and as such—like the

¹ 1 Kings xvi. 22. *Sept.*

² 1 Kings xvi. 22. *Sept.*

³ 2 Chron. xiv. 1.

⁴ That is, those raised to idols. The high places dedicated to the worship of Jehovah were still left.

⁵ 2 Chron. xiv. 2-5.

⁶ 2 Chron. xiv. 5.

Sultana Valide of the Turkish Court—the most important personage in the State after the king, had been the eager patroness of the heathenism that had prevailed. She had erected a “horrible thing,”—that is, an obscene symbol—to Asherah. This was now burnt to ashes, and strewn in the brook Kedron, as the ashes of the golden calf had been poured into the brook at Sinai by Moses and Aaron,¹ and Maachah herself was deposed from her high dignity.² The gifts dedicated by Asa's father to Jehovah had been taken into their own sanctuaries by the idol priests, but were now removed, and replaced, with additional gifts of the king, in the temple. The great brazen altar, which had likewise been used for idol sacrifices, was purified, and restored to its place.³

But though such a great religious revolution strengthened the kingdom greatly, it could not at once remove all the dangers to which it was exposed. The war with Baasha had brought danger from the north; another with Egypt imperilled the country from the south. The tribute paid to the Pharaohs since Rehoboam's defeat may have been refused by Asa, or Baasha may have stirred up the Nile power: in any case, an alarming invasion flooded the land. Jerusalem had anew been girdled by fortified towns which protected it in a measure, but its main human defence was in the vigour and fearless bravery of the king. Zerah, an Ethiopian by birth, a king of the twenty-second Egyptian dynasty,⁴ burst in on Judah with a seemingly irresistible army; but Asa met him with the whole muster of the kingdom, and inflicted on him a severe defeat near Mareshah, on the south-west Maritime Plain. The higher tone of the nation showed itself in its valour, which recalled that of the great times of David.

¹ Exod. xxxii. 20. ² 1 Kings xv. 13. 2 Chron. xv. 16. ³ 1 Kings xv. 15. 2 Chron. xv. 8. ⁴ = Osorkon. *Herzog.*, vol. xi. p. 492.

The pursuit reached to Gerar, and ended in the utter rout of the invaders, while the victors took and sacked town after town that had been tributary to Egypt; inflicting severe chastisement at the same time on the Arab tribes who had assisted the enemy, and driving off their great flocks and herds, of sheep and cattle.¹ A true-hearted ruler had fought in reliance on the aid of the invisible King of the land and had triumphed.

Asa had been encouraged in his reforms by the prophets, one of whom, Azariah, the son of Oded, is specially mentioned. The sight was thus once more offered, of the two great powers in the kingdom—the spiritual and temporal—working in harmony; and such a spectacle, added to the vigour and success of Asa in his wars, had its natural effect. The northern kingdom, distracted by revolutions, ruled by the army, and sinking more and more into a mere heathen State, had lost its charms for the more thoughtful among its people. A strong emigration hence set in from Ephraim and Manasseh,² strengthening Asa no less than it weakened

¹ 2 Chron. xiv. 15. Asa's army is said to have numbered 580,000 men, but Kennicott has pointed out (*Hebrew Text of the Old Testament Considered*) that the copyists often fell into error by the different ways of marking numbers, and by confounding the different letters which denoted them, several of which are very like each other. Hence, in the Vulgate printed at Venice, in 1486, and in the old Latin version of Josephus, we find, to quote an illustration, the armies of Abijah and Jeroboam reduced from 400,000 and 800,000 men respectively, to 40,000 and 80,000, while the number of the slain is reduced from 500,000 to 50,000. The throne of Ethiopia, it may be added, was filled at the close of the tenth century before Christ by a king named *Aserch-Amar*—which might readily, by the Hebrew custom of shortening names, become *Zerah*.^{*} It at least shows that the name was a royal one in earlier times.

² 2 Chron. xv. 2.

^{*} Lenormant, *Manuel*, vol. i. pp. 252, 253. Maspero, p. 340.

the Ten Tribes. Many of the Simeonites also, forsaking their tent life in the south, settled in Judah. And now, peace being restored, the king resolved to complete his good work of re-establishing the old faith. In the fifteenth year of his reign, a great public assembly of all the population, native or immigrant, was summoned; sacrifices from the spoils of his battles were offered to Jehovah, the true God, and the whole multitude pledged themselves, amidst the sound of trumpets and cornets, to worship Him alone, and to put to death any who sanctioned idolatry.¹

The remaining years of Asa's reign seem to have been marked by a peaceful prosperity to which the country had long been a stranger. He had committed the grave error of calling in the Syrians against Baasha, but for the time this had wrought well, for at the accession of Omri, Judah held a number of Israelitish towns in the hill country of Ephraim.² Ascending the throne in the last year of Jeroboam, he was destined to outlive Omri's reign of twelve years, after seeing the fall of Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Tibni. So strongly did the stability of Judah contrast with the revolutionary changes of Israel.

In Zimri the northern kingdom seemed to have fallen into utter confusion, after a duration of only fifty years. The civil war with Tibni once more, however, called out the manly virtues of the people, for Omri was no mere nominee of the army, but the chosen king of the more vigorous half of the population. Apart from his own special capacity, it was to this his house was in great measure indebted for such a hold on public sympathy as upheld it for four reigns. Yet each of his descendants only increased the calamities of the future by forsaking

¹ 2 Chron. xv. 10-14.

² 2 Chron. xv. 8.

more and more completely the ancient religion and the laws of the constitution.

The palace at Tirzah being burned down, and the easy fall of the town having shown the weakness of its position, Omri resolved to choose a new capital; the troublesome restlessness of the people of Shechem forbidding him to return thither. The selection he made shows his sagacity. Six miles north-west from Shechem, in a well-watered valley,¹ an oblong and almost entirely isolated white limestone hill rises some 400 feet. It sinks on the east in long gentle steps to the plain, but is steep and abrupt on all other sides, though terraced in every direction for gardens; perhaps originally for defence.² Proud hills surround it at a short distance, green with a rich vegetation, and intersected by a network of fertile valleys, larger and smaller. Though commanded from the northern range of heights, it must have been nearly impregnable before the introduction of gunpowder. The whole of this hill Omri bought for two talents of silver,³ from one Shemer, a great landowner of the day, whose name lingers in that of the city forthwith built on the site—Samaria, or Shomeron.⁴ The palace and citadel occupied the top of the hill, and the buildings of the town extended down its slopes; a strong wall, along the top of which ran a broad path,⁵ encircling the whole. From

¹ It is, in fact, in the same valley as Shechem. That it should have taken the place of that town as capital was much the same as if Versailles were to become the substitute for Paris, or Windsor for London.

² Jos., *Ant.*, XV. viii. 5.

³ About £600 of our money (*Thenius*). But the purchasing power of money was so much greater then than now, that this sum would be equal to at least £12,000 in our day.

⁴ In Assyrian, "Samirina." Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 92.

⁵ 2 Kings vi. 26, 30.

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the palace above the town, Omri could look away to the Mediterranean on the west, the crest of the hill being more than 1,500 feet above its level. On the other sides there was a varied panorama of rounded hills and gentle valleys.¹ On the south was the royal "paradise," with its springs and rich gardens. A leper colony, like that still seen under the walls of Jerusalem, lived outside the gates; a wide open space before which, as in all Eastern cities,



SAMARIA. (W. C. P. Medley, pinx.)

afforded fitting place for great ceremonials, when the king appeared in state.² The houses of the town had been at first of brick, with beams and rafters of the common sycamore; but as wealth increased, these largely gave way to mansions of hewn stone and cedar.³ In its palmy days Samaria must have presented an imposing appearance from the valleys and hills around; its streets

¹ Amos iii. 9.

² 1 Kings xxii. 10.

³ Isa. ix. 8, 10.

standing out against the slopes of the majestic hill, in girdling lines.¹

The popular support of Omri was justified by the shrewd sense and vigour of his policy, than which, apart from its religious bearings, nothing could have been more fitted to restore the prosperity of the country or secure its peace. Judah and Israel had been more or less at war for nearly fifty years, and it was at last evident that reunion was hopeless, whether voluntarily or by compulsion; while the result in mutual injury was beyond calculation. Omri, therefore, determined to reverse the policy of his predecessors on this point, and seek peace with the southern kingdom. Even Baasha, with all his vigour and capacity, had wrecked his dynasty against the barren mountains of Judah. Omri would try what the olive branch would do. Firmly seated in his new capital, which almost defied a siege, he concluded a peace with Asa,² and made its continuance one of the great features of the policy of his house. Unfortunately, it had no deeper or nobler basis than to enable the two kingdoms to defend themselves against their common enemies around, and bring these again, if possible, under tribute, as in Solomon's time. The higher destinies of the race,

¹ See *Land and Book*, p. 468. *The Dict. of the Bible*. Furrer's *Palästina*. Schenkel, Stanley, and Ewald. Omri very possibly settled Samaria in part with his soldiers, as David had done at Jerusalem. Graetz says he left Tirzah for Samaria a year after his victory over Tibni; but in 1 Kings xvi. 23, it says he reigned six years in Tirzah. Ewald thinks that of these six years, four passed in war, two as sole king, and that he afterwards reigned ten years in Samaria—in all sixteen years.

² The most friendly relations prevailed between Ahab and Jehoshaphat; but as Ahab was not the man to initiate a policy, this must be traced back to Omri, between whom and Judah, moreover, no war is mentioned.

as the elect of God, to uphold and spread the true religion, which alone could give either lasting prosperity or glory, had no place in Omri's thoughts. The Moabite stone seems to intimate that he forced Moab to resume payment of the tribute of goats and sheep, originally imposed by David, but latterly held back. This, however, brought an attack from Benhadad of Damascus, and peace was obtained only on hard terms, after some towns had been taken from Israel. Samaria was to have a Syrian quarter, for trading purposes; a Syrian Resident was to live permanently in the city, to control Omri's foreign policy, as that of native princes of Asia is dictated by British officers; the towns across the Jordan, taken from Israel, including Ramoth Gilead,² were to be retained by Benhadad, and the roads were to be open for the passage of Syrian caravans through Israel, to the countries beyond.³

But Omri's special idea was to bind his kingdom in as close an alliance as possible with Tyre, the England of that day, in its commercial activity and accumulated wealth. Virtually one in language, his people and the Phenicians were natural allies, but for the hateful and corrupting idolatry, which made isolation the only safety for Israel. Besides, the country depended on Tyrian goods, and Tyrian traders already engrossed the activity of its bazaars. No scruples troubled the king as to a close alliance with a heathen community. Had any good come to Israel by its separation from other races? Had any harm come to Tyre from its religion? Was not its population the richest in the world? If he could bring prosperity to his subjects, it would keep them quiet, and

¹ Graetz, *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 433.

² 1 Kings xxii. 3.

³ Ewald, vol. iii. p. 488, thinks that a right to march through the country was granted, but this seems unlikely.

make him the master of the different factions, besides enabling him to disband part of the army, and prevent its being, as heretofore, supreme in the State.

The internal politics of Tyre had been latterly as disturbed as those of Israel. King after king had been dethroned and murdered, till at last Ithobaal, or Ethbaal, a priest of Ashtoreth, had seized supreme power, after murdering his brother, Phalles.¹ Such commotions had necessarily weakened the State, especially by causing an extensive emigration of wealthy families, to found new colonies in Northern Africa. Benhadad of Damascus, moreover, now so powerful, was believed to be meditating an attack on the Phenician communities, to absorb them into his empire. Ethbaal was doubtless, therefore, only too willing to conclude an alliance offensive and defensive with Omri, and it was determined to seal it by a marriage between Ahab, the heir to the throne of Israel, and a princess of Tyre. But this event, which must have seemed at the time a great stroke of policy on both sides, proved a supreme calamity in its results. As the marriage of Henrietta Maria determined the fall of the Stuarts, that of JEZEBEL with Ahab carried with it the ruin of Omri's dynasty. She was not the first Israelitish queen of the old Canaanite races, for David had married the daughter of the chief of Geshur,² and Solomon had wives of almost all the neighbouring peoples, including the Hittites and Zidonians.³ But these had hitherto played a subordinate part in the country, though in the case of Solomon they had led to the first formal sanction of idolatry in Jerusalem. Jezebel, however—fierce, imperious, vindictive, able, and unscrupulous, was to show

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. xiii. 1, 2. *C. Apion*, i. 18. Mövers, *Phönizier*, vol. ii. p. 344.

² 1 Chron. iii. 2.

³ 1 Kings xi. 1.

herself the one domineering will in Israel; Ahab, her husband, though king, taking only the second place, as the passive instrument of her stronger nature.

In his eagerness to propitiate Tyre—perhaps also in his belief that to Canaanize his people would protect him from the influence of the prophets, which had been so dangerous to his predecessors—Omri not only ignored the theocratic basis of his kingdom, but lent his active support to the introduction of heathenism. Edicts, known long after as the "Statutes of Omri,"¹ expressly favoured idolatry. The prophets were treated as public enemies.² Even the calf worship was no longer in court favour; to worship Jehovah, with or without a symbol, was out of date. It had kept Israel and Tyre apart, and was now to be discontinued.

This policy, steadily carried out, had its reward. If the morals of the country were being sapped, its wealth was increasing; if the lofty mission of Israel as the people of God was forgotten, there were no revolutions, at least for the time. From the reign of Omri there dates an increase in luxury that speaks of wide commercial activity and success.

The reign of Ahab³ may be remembered as commencing, to use round numbers, 900 years before Christ. A man of weak will, and fond of the show and luxury of royalty, but indisposed to discharge its duties, he was not, as some have thought, a cruel tyrant, so much as feeble in character. Not unwarlike when forced to action, and sensitive for the honour of his house and people, he loved peace, with its refinements and indulgences, and, like his father, promoted it to the utmost. His misfortune was that the strength of will wanting in himself was

¹ Mic. vi. 16.

² 1 Kings xvi. 25.

³ Ahab, B.C. 919-897 (received Bibl. chron.).

predominant in his queen, whose tool he thus became in her worst designs and acts. The wide prosperity Omri had brought to the country continued after his death, and enabled Ahab to gratify his tastes for splendour and self-enjoyment. Samaria remained the capital, but it was too crowded with houses to please him, and he therefore raised a new palace at Jezreel, in the plain of Esdraelon, with rich gardens in which he might take his ease.¹ He was a great builder besides, founding a number of new cities.² Solomon had been contented with a throne of ivory, but the new relations with Tyre, the great centre of the African and Indian trade, enabled Ahab to build a mansion, in the ornamentation of which ivory played a principal part.³ The nobles and richer citizens, participating in the general wealth which such a house implied, vied with each other in costly display and luxury. One Hiel of Bethel ventured, notwithstanding the curse of Joshua, to fortify Jericho, in the rich valley of the Jordan, but he did so at a heavy cost, for he lost his eldest and youngest sons while the work was in progress.⁴ A hundred years later, Amos could still speak of the winter and summer houses of the great northern chiefs—of their splendid mansions and ivory palaces,⁵

¹ Jezreel lies on the watershed between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. The whole plain of Esdraelon, with Carmel, was in view to the west, and to the east the eye wanders down to the oasis of Bethshean on the Jordan. Two springs, one twelve, the other twenty minutes from the town, flow from the base of the hills of Gilboa, which sink into the plain near the town, towards the east.

² 1 Kings xxii. 39.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ 1 Kings xvi. 34. It had been rebuilt for ages, but was now fortified. Judg. i. 16, iii. 13. 2 Sam. x. 5.

⁵ Amos iii. 15.

fitted up luxuriously with ivory couches and costly divans, on which they reclined at their banquets; the old simplicity of sitting on carpets having passed away.¹ Lambs and fatted calves, in former days rare signs of a generous hospitality, had become the daily food. The meals of the rich were splendid feasts, to which they lay down anointed with the costliest perfumes.² Unmixed wine, emptied into huge bowls, in which their fathers had been contented to mingle their wine with water, was now the ordinary drink; and musicians discoursed with harps and viols, as their masters rang out their bacchanalian songs.³ The court movement in favour of heathenism, begun by Omri, continued with increased energy under his son. The alienation from the religious traditions of the nation was complete. All that was sacred in the popular feelings was outraged by the settled purpose of the Crown to extirpate the worship of Jehovah, even under the symbol of Jeroboam's calves, and establish Phenician idolatry as the only tolerated religion of Israel.⁴ This was Jezebel's purpose. Haughty and ambitious; looking on the foreign people among whom she had come, with insolent contempt; a fanatic for the religion of her own country, as was natural in the daughter of a priest, she knew how to make her husband the passive agent in carrying out her plans. A vast temple to Baal was built in Samaria, large enough to contain an immense throng of worshippers.⁵ It stood, apparently, within a great walled enclosure, and rose in such strength as to seem like a castle.⁶ A huge image of the Sun-god, flanked by idolatrous symbols, was seen within, amidst a blaze of splendour, reflected from gilded and painted

¹ 1 Sam. xx. 24.² Eccles. ix. 8.³ Amos vi. 4-7.⁴ 1 Kings xvi. 31.⁵ 1 Kings xvi. 32; 2 Kings x. 21.⁶ 2 Kings x. 26.

roofs, and walls, and columns. A staff of 450 priests in their vestments ministered at the altars, and Ahab himself attended the worship in state, presenting rich offerings; doubtless amidst all the wild excitement and license which marked the service of Baal.¹

But the other great Phenician deity could not be neglected. A temple to Asherah, the Canaanite Venus, was built, apparently in the precincts of Jezreel; 400 priests ministering in its courts and offering on its obscene altars.² Of this Jezebel was the especial patroness, maintaining the whole establishment at her own cost.



THE SACRED TREE OF THE ASSYRIANS.³

It is hard to realize the hurtful perversion of conscience, the weakening of moral convictions, and the clouding of true reverence, which such attacks on the sanctities

¹ 1 Kings xvi. 31, xviii. 19. 2 Kings iii. 2; x. 25-27.

² 1 Kings xvi. 33; xviii. 19.

³ It is in its oldest and simplest form in this illustration. The symbol of the god Ashur—the winged circle—is over the royal personages who worship, barefoot. Two good genii stand behind them. Canon Rawlinson thinks the Phenician Asherah, "or grove" of our Version, was the counterpart of the sacred tree of Assyria. *Anc. Mon.*, vol. ii. p. 238.

of religion must have involved ; or how deeply the people must have been corrupted by royal favour shown to a gross and sensual idolatry. Nor could it be hoped that a power which thus trampled on all that was sacred, would hesitate to outrage the lower rights of popular liberty. Everything tended to bring about a deadly struggle against a monarchy which, though established to protect the hereditary religion and privileges of the nation, had been metamorphosed into their imperious and deadly foe. The multitude, led away by royal example, might yield to the ruling fashion, but nobler hearts would turn so much the more against the House of Omri. The magnitude of the interests at stake would rouse the prophets especially, to the intensest resistance. Events were hurrying to a crisis, which, as in all similar decisive moments of history, must bring forward some strong personality, to embody the inarticulate feeling of the multitude, and be its champion. The advent of Elijah was near at hand.

Meanwhile, the contrast of affairs in Judah was striking. At the close of a long and prosperous reign of forty-one years, King Asa died, after suffering for two years with a disease in the feet, apparently the gout,¹ though details are not given. Amidst a high eulogium on his character as a whole, it is gently noted as a failing in his last illness, that he consulted the priestly physicians of the day, apparently with a superstitious trust in their prescriptions, as if, like oracles² or idol sorcerers, their power were supreme ; forgetting to rely, above all, on Jehovah, even when the means were lawful. That such a blemish in the life of so good a man, and he a king, should

¹ *Dict. of Bible*, art. *Asa*.

² So the word is used in 1 Chron. x. 14. 1 Sam. xxviii. 7. 2 Kings i. 2.

have been handed down to the time when the Books of Chronicles were written, throws a strange light on the lofty ideal of religious life in Israel; an ideal which it would be vain to look for in any other people, ancient or modern.

Asa, like an Egyptian king, had built or caused to be hewn out for himself, a new grave, distinct from the royal tombs, with a number of compartments or cells, and in one of these he was buried with great pomp, amidst universal lamentation. His coffin or sarcophagus, moreover, as is especially mentioned, was filled up with a mixture of fragrant spices to help to preserve the body, and a vast quantity of incense was burned in honour of him at his burial, as was customary at the funeral of kings;¹ in imitation of the practice at the death of the Pharaohs of Egypt.² He died in the year B.C. 917.

Jehoshaphat,³ fortunately for Judah, was a worthy son of so good a father. At his accession, Omri was still reigning, but he died two years after, so that Ahab and the new southern king began their reigns almost together. As brave as his father, but more enterprising; equally faithful to Jehovah, but with broader views of his duties as a theocratic ruler; the twenty-five years of his reign were a bright spot in the history of his country. He was in his early prime at his father's death—a man of 35—sensitive to the honour of his fatherland, ready to make sacrifices for its independence, and bent on raising its religious and moral tone still higher than his father had succeeded in doing.

To protect himself from without, garrisons were placed

¹ 2 Chron. xvi. 12-14. Jer. xxxiv. 5.

² Wilkinson, vol. ii. p. 385.

³ —Jehovah judges, *Cheyne*; or, Jehovah judges rightly, *Mühlau und Volck*. Asa, by the way, means "the physician."

in the walled towns of Judah, and in those places in the hill country of Ephraim, the capture of which had darkened the close of Baasha's reign.¹ He also built new fortresses in Judah, and military and trade depots, which he filled with all kinds of stores.² The muster roll of the kingdom was carefully kept, so that all the men able to bear arms could be called out, if necessary, at once. The result of so much vigour was seen alike at home and abroad. Thoroughly loyal, the people everywhere freely contributed to support the throne with becoming state; the Philistines once more paid tribute, which had been intermitted for a time, and even the tent Arabs of the south-east did the same in flocks of sheep and goats.³ The southern kingdom had not been held in so great respect since the death of Solomon.

But Jehoshaphat was much more than merely a vigorous and politic ruler. He felt with even greater force than Asa that the prosperity of a people depends on their morality, and that this in turn is determined by their religion. Here and there over the land there still remained some Asherahs with their foul impurity, and some idolatrous high places. These he at once destroyed,⁴ though he did not attempt to remove those high places or local altars which were dedicated to Jehovah.⁵ It was, indeed, time that the cancer of heathenism should be eradicated from the kingdom as far as possible. On the top of the hills, as sacred to the sun-god, "under every green tree and under every thick oak,"⁶ gay-coloured tents were pitched for the obscenities of Asherah worship, for there were still temple harlots in the land.⁷ Gaudy images of

¹ 2 Chron. xvii. 1, 2.

² *Ibid.*, ver. 12, 13.

³ *Ibid.*, ver. 9-11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ver. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.* xx. 33.

⁶ Ezek. vi. 13. 2 Kings xxiii. 7.

⁷ 1 Kings xxii. 46.

Baal in his different characters, resplendent in gold and silver, and mingled, perhaps, with symbols of Jehovah, stood robed in costly vestments, and were honoured with incense and offerings of bread and fine flour, and oil and honey. Still worse, sacrifices of children of both sexes were too common.¹

But merely external reformation is necessarily superficial, nor can the forcible removal of the outward symptoms of evil secure its repudiation in the heart and life. To effect this, Jehoshaphat wisely felt that the ignorance from which in part it sprang must be enlightened, and worthier conceptions supplied to engage the interest of the multitude. He determined, therefore, to establish, throughout the land, a general system of religious instruction, based on the one true foundation of sound morals and healthy religious life—"the Book of the Law of Jehovah."² A royal commission of five "princes" was entrusted with this great undertaking; nine Levites and two priests being associated with them as their colleagues; assisted doubtless by a multitude of local teachers from the priests and Levites, appointed in the different cities and towns. A lesson this to modern legislation! It was an honest and frank confession by king and people that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and that the

¹ Ezek. xvi. 16-21. Smend thinks the children were killed first, quoting Gen. xxii. 10. 1 Sam. xv. 33. *Ezekiel*, pp. 94, 95.

² 2 Chron. xvii. 9. The mention of the "Thorah" or "Law" as already known and in public use in the 10th century before Christ is fatal to the theory advanced of late years that it is a creation of the days of Josiah, 300 years later. But if thus recognised as the national Scriptures so early, what ground is left for challenging its origin, essentially in its present form, in the Mosaic age? What age between Moses and Jehoshaphat could have palmed off its productions as veritable relics of Sinai, which the "Books of the Law" claim to be?

word of God is the only true lamp to the feet, or light to the path, of a nation or an individual.

Nor was the establishment of a national system of godly education the only fundamental reform of this pattern ruler. Justice had become tainted at its source. It was impossible that the king should personally try all cases in so great a community. Judges of civil and criminal cases were therefore appointed to sit in all the fortified towns; these being the centres of population. Nobler charge to these dignitaries could no man give, than that which they received. "Ye are to judge, not for men, to win bribes or favour the strong, but as before Jehovah, the true king of Israel, whose laws you are to administer, and whose eyes watch you as you sit on the judgment seat. No injustice, or respect of persons, or taking of bribes passes unnoticed by Him."¹ In such a kingdom as Judah, however, ecclesiastical courts, also, were essential, and these were established in Jerusalem. Skilled Levites, priests, and heads of "houses" were appointed to the high office. Questions involving the distinction between manslaughter and murder, or the meaning and application of different ecclesiastical laws,² were to be decided by them as a great court of appeal, the high priest acting as president.³ A layman, "the prince of the House of Judah," was president of the court of civil and criminal law.

¹ 2 Chron. xix. 5-7. ² Deut. xvii. 8-11. ³ 2 Chron. xix. 11.

Notes on n. 1, p. 38.—Dillmann thinks Zerah was only the Egyptian general, and that he is called "the Ethiopian," either from his nationality, or from his bearing the honorary title, frequent in the earlier Egyptian dynasties, of "Prince of Ethiopia." The governor of Nubia, of the royal family, was so styled. He is not called "King of Ethiopia" in the Book of Chronicles. *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 283. Brugsch, *Histoire d'Egypte*, Leipzig, 1859, p. 89.



CHAPTER III.

ELIJAH ; THE GREAT PROPHET-REFORMER.

WHILE Judah was steadily retracing its steps from the errors of late years to the sound and healthy principles of purer times, Ahab and his wife Jezebel, were leading Israel constantly farther from them. Baal worship was now the established religion of the State, that of Jehovah being proscribed. Bands of wretched beings "consecrated" to Baal and Asherah, as described in a former chapter,¹ wandered through the land, stirring the towns and villages to a strange excitement. The loose women connected with the idol temples plied their arts far and near. Pompous rites on a magnificent scale were celebrated in the heathen temples, for Jezebel hoped by such means to drive out the worship of Jehovah from Israel. A crusade was systematically carried out under the orders of a high priest of Baal.² The altars of God were everywhere overthrown,³ and others, with the obscene symbols of the Phenician idols, erected in their stead. The people were forced to offer at these, and having no other holy places, largely apostatized. Only 7,000 could ere long be found who had not bowed the knee to the idol image, or kissed their hands to it in

¹ See vol. iii. p. 464.

² 2 Kings xi. 18.

³ 1 Kings xix. 10, 14; xviii. 30.

homage.¹ A fierce onslaught against the prophets had cut them down wherever found, and doubtless many others, faithful to Jehovah, had perished with them. It is the first religious persecution known in history, and fittingly had Jezebel for its instigator and author. To this time, no doubt, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers when he speaks of the faithful wandering about in sheep skins and goat skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented ; hiding themselves in deserts, or the depth of mountains, or the darkness of caverns.² Some leader was needed to keep the nation from finally passing over wholly to heathenism ; to strengthen the weak and timid ; to rouse the supine, and to kindle enthusiasm by his noble fidelity, fervour, and self-sacrifice. Such a hero appeared in Elijah.

The steady political and religious decay of the northern kingdom had had its natural effect in a striking development of the order of prophets—the defenders of popular rights and the champions of the ancient faith. They had never failed since the time of Samuel ; but in the interval between his day and that of Elijah, no associated companies of them are mentioned. In the reign of Ahab, however, we find no fewer than 400 assembled in Samaria at one time ; and Obadiah, the court chamberlain, a worshipper of Jehovah, was able to conceal a hundred, by fifties, in two caverns, during the hottest of the persecution. In ordinary times the people sought their help and trusted in their utterances with unquestioning reverence ;³ their word was a command ; they were lawgivers in the State, and virtually commanders in war. Nor could any prince, however opposed to them, permanently resist their influence. He might drive them

¹ 1 Kings xix. 18.

² Heb. xi. 37, 38.

³ 1 Kings xiv. 2. 2 Kings iv. 1 ff.

off for a time, but before long he was glad to seek their counsel once more, and to obey their directions.¹ Nor could the fiercest measures destroy an institution so deeply rooted in the popular esteem, for we find the prophet societies flourishing after the close of Jezebel's proscription, at the ancient holy centres of Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho.²

On the prophets rested the hope of the future. The degraded priesthood that had supplanted that of Aaron had entirely lost position and independence. Unfortunately, the times which had tried others put the prophets also to a test which too many of them failed to stand. The fierceness of Jezebel terrified not a few into silence. Many fled to the security of the desert or the hills, and large numbers were won over to an outward conformity to Baal worship, or, at least, to a politic and unworthy complaisance towards power. From Ahab's reign there appear "false prophets;" men who, to get quiet, or honour, or pay, used their high gifts to flatter and serve the great, by prophesying what they fancied would please.³ Henceforward the pure and noble among the order had to contend, with ever-increasing earnestness, against this corruption and debasement of some of its members, and were too often persecuted by them.⁴

Still, amidst this reign of terror, there were some faithful Abdiels who clung to the religion of their fathers, and among these, but high above them all, towered Elijah, "the grandest and most romantic character that

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 16; xxii. 5. 2 Kings i. 2; iii. 11.

² 2 Kings ii. 2-7, 15-22; iv. 23, 38; vi. 1-7.

³ 1 Kings xxii. 8.

⁴ 1 Kings xxii. 22. Jer. xxiii. 9-40. Ezek. xiii. 2. Zech. xiii. 8-6. Isa. ix. 15; xxviii. 7. Mic. ii. 11; iii. 11.

Israel ever produced."¹ He had the greatness of soul to stand up singly, face to face with the whole power of the kingdom, on behalf of Jehovah. Appearing and disappearing like an apparition, his life depending on his rapid flight after delivering his message, no dangers kept him back from any point where duty demanded his presence. He shows how one man, strong in the support of God and the right, can by fearless courage and absorbing zeal change the whole course of history in his time; resist and overthrow the most crushing tyranny over conscience, and bring in a new victorious epoch. He was an anticipation of Athanasius in his grand attitude of standing "alone against the world," and he was the conqueror in the struggle.

The abruptness of his introduction adds to the interest of his story. Nothing is told us of his parentage or birthplace, beyond the words "Elijah, the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead;" but where Tishbeh was is as yet altogether uncertain.² His whole character, however, and his appearance and habits of life, point to his being a Gileadite, though it seems impossible to believe with Graetz that he was not an Israelite, but belonged to one of the old native races.³ Gilead was a land of chase and pasture, of tent villages and mountain castles; with a population of wandering, half-civilized, fierce shepherds, ready at all times to repel the attacks of the desert tribes, or to go out on a foray against them.⁴ Many of these

¹ *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 328.

² The *Sept.* has "Tishbeh of Gilead." It has been fancied from a verse in Tobit (i. 2), that Tishbeh was in Naphtali. But this is not tenable. It seems an error in translation. In the *Handbuch zu den Apokryphen*, vol. ii. p. 23, Fritzsche thinks there was a Tishbeh in Gilead and another in Naphtali.

³ *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 28.

⁴ 1 Chron. v. 10, 19-22.

Arab traits are seen in the notices of Elijah. Apparently tall,¹ he must have been sinewy and thin from his simple fare, his hard life, the rapidity of his movements, and his powers of physical endurance. His hair hung long and thick down his back, for he was a Nazarite. It would seem, indeed, that the prophets as a rule took this vow.² His dress was a simple tunic, held round him by a belt of hide, which he tightened when, like a Bedouin, he wished to run for a long distance.³ Over this he commonly wore, like the peasants of Palestine now, a mantle or cape of sheepskin⁴ with the wool on it, or of coarse camel's hair cloth, which, as already noticed, became the special characteristic of prophets.⁵ In this mantle he at times hid his face when under strong emotion,⁶ and he used it, rolled up like a staff, to smite the waters of Jordan when about to pass over them.⁷ On one occasion we find him bowing himself on the ground, with his face between his knees, perhaps in prayer, though the usual attitude in devotion was to stand.⁸

The immense influence of Elijah during his life is seen in the place he held in the memory of after generations in Israel. He takes rank along with Samuel and Moses; not like the former, as the apostle of a system yet undeveloped; or as the founder of a religion, like the latter;

¹ This is the Jewish tradition.

² Amos ii. 11, 12.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 46.

⁴ The word for this garment is that used to describe the hair which covered Esau (Gen. xxv. 25), and for the Babylonish garment stolen by Achan (Josh. vii. 21), but it is not used in connection with any prophet before Elijah.

⁵ Zech. xiii. 4. Isa. xx. 2. Matt. iii. 4.

⁶ 1 Kings xix. 13.

⁷ 2 Kings ii. 8.

⁸ 1 Kings xviii. 42. Mark xi. 25. Matt. vi. 5.

but as the restorer of the old when it was almost driven from the earth. The prophet Malachi portrays him as the announcer of the great and terrible day of Jehovah. His reappearance was constantly expected as the precursor of the Messiah. So continually was he in the thoughts of the people of New Testament times that both John the Baptist and our Lord were supposed to be no other than he.¹ The son of Sirach calls him a fire, and says that his word burned like a torch,² and that it was he who was to gather together again the tribes of Israel from the great dispersion.³ The Jews believe that he has appeared often to wise and good Rabbis, generally under the form of an Arab merchant.⁴ At the circumcision of Jewish children, a seat is always left vacant for him.⁵ After the wine cup of each passover is drunk, the youngest child of a Jewish family opens the door, and all rise and look towards it, thinking that Elijah then enters.⁶ His final coming, it is believed, will be three days before that of the Messiah, and on each of the three he will proclaim peace, happiness, and salvation, in a voice that will be heard over all the earth.⁷ So firm, indeed, was the conviction of this in the days of the Talmud, that when goods were found which no owner

¹ Matt. xi. 14. Mark ix. 11. Luke i. 17. Matt. xvii. 12, 13; xvi. 14. Mark vi. 15. John i. 21. The dervishes of the East have evidently copied their habits, in part, from traditions of Elijah. They wear their hair its full length, and wind a leather strap round their waist as a girdle. *Morier, MS. Notes.* See vol. iii. p. 67.

² *Ecclus.* xlviii. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, ver. 10.

⁴ *Eisenmenger*, vol. i. p. 11; vol. ii. pp. 402-7.

⁵ *Isaac's Manners, etc., of the Jews*, p. 118.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁷ *Eisenmenger*, vol. i. p. 685.

claimed, the common saying was, Put them by till Elijah comes.¹

Like every great enthusiastic soul, that of Elijah kindled others by his words and example. He quickened the religious life of the nation, as Samuel had done in his day. Thus, the sect of the Rechabites seems to have owed its origin to him—a body of faithful servants of God collected by Jonadab, the son of Rechab, who retired from the strife and persecution of the times, to worship Jehovah in seclusion from the temptations and trials of the world. The hope of the future, they fancied, lay in a strict return to the simplicity and strictness of the past, and they therefore bound themselves to live in tents. They chose the lonely wilderness of the Southern Jordan for their home; and adopted in their fulness the vows of Nazarites. Abstaining from wine and the grape, they confined themselves for food to the productions of the desert, and formally bound themselves to have neither tilled land, nor vineyards, nor fixed dwellings.²

But the most striking result of the appearance of Elijah was the impulse he gave to prophetic activity. The communities of sons, or disciples, of the prophets, of which there is no mention from the earlier years of David, appear again in the fullest vigour,³ cherishing the ancient faith in the calm and seclusion of their settlements. Among these there were not wanting such as Micaiah,⁴ to stand up boldly, like Elijah, before the world, for the truth. The honoured servant of Elijah, Elisha, the son of Shaphat,⁵ especially takes a grand place

¹ Lightfoot, *Exercit.* Matt. xvii. 10. John i. 21.

² Jer. xxxv. 5-10. See *Graetz*, vol. ii. p. 29. *Eisenlohr*, vol. ii. p. 166.

³ 2 Kings ii. 2-7, 15-22; iv. 38; vi. 1-7. ⁴ 1 Kings xxii. 9.

⁵ Shaphat—a judge, marking the rank of the prophet's father.

as the champion of Jehovah, and, after him, generations of his order showed, in their zeal and incorruptible loyalty to God, how deeply the example of the Tishbite had stirred them.

Yet the work of Elijah, with all its glory, was marked by the imperfection of the dispensation to which he belonged. The defender of a national theocracy, he burst on his age as a minister of judgment against unrighteousness: his sternness like that of the storm; his words lightning and tempest. All his acts show him like a fire, consuming the ungodly; an embodiment of the avenging justice of Jehovah in an evil day. Growing zeal, dauntlessness of soul, and unbending severity are his leading traits, though he showed the gentlest sympathy in the relations of private life.¹ As the great and strong wind, and the earthquake and fire, rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks, before Jehovah—the awful precursors of the still small voice, for which they prepared the way—Elijah came to open the path for the kingdom of God, and bring about a state of things in which its gentle message of love could be proclaimed amongst men. He was not so much the foreshadowing image of our Divine Master as a contrast to His Spirit. The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. The wish of His disciples to call down fire from heaven, as Elijah had done, to consume those who refused to receive Him, evoked only a rebuke from Jesus Christ.²

The first appearance of Elijah is introduced with a startling suddenness. In the opening of a verse he is in the presence of Ahab, and at its close he vanishes, we know not whither. The persecution had cut off many of his brethren, but he, the most hated of all, had eluded his

¹ 1 Kings xvii. 8 ff.

² Luke ix. 54, 55.

enemies, and now fearlessly approached the king, to denounce his weakness and wickedness, and make known an impending judgment on himself and the nation for their sins. Advancing with undismayed bearing to the royal chariot, he delivers his message as Ahab rides past in some lonely spot, without Queen Jezebel, whom, with a keen estimate of the character of both, Elijah carefully shuns. The guilty man is appalled by hearing that, "As surely as Jehovah, the one only God of Israel, lives"—that God before whom, in defiance of king and court, the prophet stands, as a servant before an earthly monarch, waiting His commands, looking only to Him as his Lord, and ready to defend His word against the whole power of man—the guilt of Ahab, and that of the nation in suffering him to act as he did, and in turning after him to serve strange gods, will be visited by the terrible curse of "there being no dew nor rain these years, but according to Elijah's word."¹ The kingly power had so crushed the ancient liberties of Israel, by the establishment of a military despotism, that it was virtually supreme. But it was cowed before the apparition of one who grandly proclaimed his allegiance to the invisible God, and dared to be faithful to Him in defiance of all earthly authority. The lofty spirit of Elijah, contending for the truth, carried with it a victorious and invincible power, both in itself and in its hold on the sympathies of men, like that which, in modern times, made Mary of Guise dread the prayers of Knox more than an army of 10,000 men. But though arrested and alarmed for the moment, the strong will of Jezebel soon dissipated any passing goodness in her husband, and the persecution continued, drawing with it the curse of God on the land. A failure of rain was presently

¹ 1 Kings xvii. 1.

noted; one of the most terrible calamities in a country where water is in the strictest sense the condition of life. No trace of a cloud relieved the awful brightness of the heavens. The seed died in the ground; the landscape was everywhere scorched into barrenness. The hollow of the sky glowed like brass, and the earth grew like iron.¹ The brooks failed, and with them the fringe of green on their borders. The pools in their deeper parts and in the beds of torrents dried up. The water in the huge underground cisterns over the country was ere long exhausted. Winter brought no relief. No former or latter rains fell in the autumn or spring. The land lay gasping under a terrible spell, which the idol priests could do nothing to remove. The drought extended even to Phenicia,² as we learn not only from the Scriptures, but from a heathen writer quoted by Josephus. "There was a want of rain," says he, "for a year, under Ethbaal" (the father of Jezebel); "but," he adds, "when he made great prayers, heavy thunderstorms came."³ This was no doubt the drought foretold by Elijah, though it lasted three years in Israel, and its cessation was due to the death of Baal's priests, not to their supplications.

Meanwhile Elijah fled to the Cherith, on the east of the Jordan, where so many torrents cleave the high table-lands of Gilead, and the abundant woods secure a long supply of water. The position of this retreat is not known; but in the thickets that hung over the yet unexhausted stream, the prophet hid himself for the time. There, we are told, he drank of the brook, and was supported by bread and flesh brought him each morning and evening by ravens, whose voracious habits his Divine Master had

¹ Deut. xxviii. 23.

² 1 Kings xvii. 14.

³ Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. xiii. 4.

controlled so that they became the ministers to His servant in his necessity.¹ After a time, however, the pools in the bed of the Cherith dried up; the thickets on its banks withered, and the very birds had to forsake the spot. Another refuge was imperative, and this time it was found, by Divine direction, at Zarephath, the modern village of Sarafend, on the shore of the Mediterranean, about ten miles south of Sidon. No one in Israel was to have the honour of entertaining the prophet.² The heights of Lebanon, with their many rivers and streams, must have supplied Phenicia with water long after it had become scarce in Israel, and the very daring which sought shelter in the territory of Ethbaal would of itself make that retreat the more secure.

In this remote village, overlooking the plain and the sea, lived a widow of the same race and religion as Jezebel herself,³ but very different in spirit. As Elijah, tired and faint with long travel, approached the gate of the town, she had come to the open space outside, to gather a few sticks in preparation for what she thought would be her last meal; for the drought had raised prices beyond the reach of a poor widow. While thus busy, the voice of the stranger arrested her. "Would she bring

¹ It is a lesson to the Inquisitors who regard any trace of mental freedom in a religious book as justifying their pious denunciation of the author, that Dr. Kitto, whom no one with either head or heart would accuse of heresy, timidly suggests, as if under terror of some literary Torquemada, that instead of *Orebim*, "ravens," we should read *Arbim*, "Arabs," by changing the vowels. (*Bib. Illust.*, vol. iv. p. 219.) But this change is inadmissible, from the unanimity of the Hebrew MSS. It is to be noticed that there is no other trace of the miraculous in the passage.

² How greatly that honour was prized is well shown in Strauss, *Pilgrimage of Helon*, vol. i. p. 17.

³ She says, "thy God." 1 Kings xvii. 12.

him a drink of water?" Elijah had asked this to test whether he had found her to whom he had been sent, and her instant compliance showed him that he had. A further request, therefore, followed, on her going off for the water, that she would bring him "a morsel of bread in her hand." But her means were at the lowest, for she had only a handful of meal left in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse. The gaunt, travel-worn stranger, however, knew how to win her kind offices. His appearance, very probably, convinced her that he was a "holy man;" a title often given to the devotees of Eastern religions. Trusting his assurance that Jehovah, the God of Israel, whom, now as ever, he openly owned, even in such times and in Phenicia, would keep her meal and oil from failing till He sent rain on the earth,¹ she hastened to obey him.

After such an introduction, he found a hearty welcome in the widow's house. She had seen better days, for her house had an "aliyah" or roof-chamber built over it—the room specially appropriated for guests, as the best furnished in the house,² and usually dedicated, in a well-ordered family, to meditation and prayer.³ In this or some other retreat the prophet must have spent more than two years, during which the miracle of the restoration of the widow's son to life took place; Jewish tradition adding that he afterwards waited on Elijah in his journeys, and finally became the first prophet to the heathen world—Jonah, the son of Amittai—the messenger of God to guilty Nineveh.⁴

Meanwhile the awful drought continued, bringing in

¹ 1 Kings xvii. 8-16.

² *Land and Book*, p. 160.

³ *Helon's Pilgrimage*, vol. i. p. 20. See p. 116.

⁴ Eisenmenger, *Entd. Jud.*, vol. ii. p. 725.

its train all the horrors of famine on the northern kingdom. Samaria itself suffered terribly.¹ Pasture at last utterly failed even for the royal horses and mules.² Field crops had long since disappeared, but it might still be hoped that some grass could be found round the springs which abound in Central Palestine, or in the holes and shady spots of torrent beds, where a little moisture would perhaps yet remain. In his extremity, Ahab himself determined to search the country for relief, along with the chamberlain of the palace, his most confidential officer; each taking a separate route. Suddenly, as Obadiah was on his journey, Elijah stood before him. He had been long sought for by Jezebel, acting in Ahab's name, through all the neighbouring kingdoms; an oath being demanded from each that he could not be found in it; and, now, he is in Ahab's very neighbourhood. At such an apparition, the minister, overwhelmed with awe, fell on his face, as before one rightly claiming the lowliest reverence.³ Two words only, but two of awful significance to the faithful Obadiah, followed, as a summons to take to the king—"Behold—Elijah!" Ahab would expect that his servant would then and there have killed the prophet, rather than bear his message. Moreover, it was a daring thing to ask an Eastern king to come to a subject, instead of that subject humbly approaching the monarch. Was not his tried fidelity to Jehovah in the past, added Obadiah, a ground for some favour now? He had kept a hundred prophets alive through the persecution and famine, feeding them on all the times afforded, bread and water, and hiding them in

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 2.

² *Ibid.*, ver. 5. The words "that we lose not all," are translated by Thenius "so that we shall have to kill some of them."

³ 1 Kings xviii. 7, 9.

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secure hill caves. Elijah might be carried off by the Spirit of God as suddenly as he had come, and, in that case, to tell Ahab that he had been seen and not slain would be the messenger's death. Being assured, however, that the prophet would face the king, Obadiah went to him and he at once obeyed the summons. His rough salute, "Art thou there, O troubler of Israel?" soon calmed into awe as Elijah retorted the charge on him and his House. *He* had troubled Israel by forsaking Jehovah and following the Baals. Quailing before the dreaded "man of God," Ahab listened with alarmed submission. King elsewhere, he had now found a master in whose hands he was only a passive instrument. He was commanded, rather than asked, to summon the prophets of Baal and Asherah to a great meeting at Mount Carmel, Elijah's special haunt, and already a holy place, famous for an altar of Jehovah, now overthrown, like all others, throughout the land. No spot could have been more fitting for the purpose intended. The long range of Carmel, some parts of which rise 1,600 and 1,700 feet above the sea, skirts the whole south of Esdraelon. Of this the promontory at the western end, rising about 600 feet above the waters at its foot, was chosen. Though then bare and scorched, like the whole country, its luxuriant richness in ordinary times was a proverb. Its "excellency"¹ was the ideal of supreme fertility to the Hebrew mind. Rocky dells with deep jungles of copse, shrubberies thicker than any others in Central Palestine, open glades, and slopes bright with hollyhocks, jasmine, flowery creepers, and a world of blossoms, shrubs, and fragrant herbs, still delight the eye.² In comparison even with the hills of Samaria, the sides of which alone

¹ Isa. xxxiii. 9. Mic. vii. 14.

² Stanley. Porter. Vandeveldt. Martineau.

were fruitful, Carmel, crowned as well as clothed with verdure, was the paradise of the land. The altar on it was a great place of religious resort on new moons and Sabbaths.¹ Its reputation as a sanctuary, centuries later, led Pythagoras thither, while Tacitus tells us that Vespasian found on it, even in his time, an altar with out image or temple.² It was, moreover, at a prudent distance from Samaria and Jezreel for Elijah's present purpose.

On the appointed day the 450 prophets of Baal assembled at the indicated spot, but those of Asherah seem to have been kept back by Jezebel. The place selected appears to have been the summit of the height at the east end of the promontory, offering the last view of the sea and the first of the great plain of Esdraelon. From amidst a belt of fine trees a line of cliffs rises more than 200 feet; the crest bearing the name of El Maharrakah—the "burning" or "the sacrifice."³ Here lay scattered the stones of the altar of Jehovah, which had been recently thrown down; and hither, apparently from a tradition of the fact, the Druses still come yearly from Lebanon in great numbers to offer sacrifice. Close beneath the rocks, under the shade of ancient olive trees, is a well which is said never to fail, and this, even after the long drought, still held sufficient water to supply Elijah with as much as he required. Round this were

¹ 2 Kings iv. 23.

² *Dict. of Geog.*, art. *Carmelus*.

³ Vandevelde says this must be the spot, as it is the only point of all Carmel where the Kishon is near enough to take the priests of Baal to it; and return to the hill to pray, after slaying them. Nowhere else does the stream run so close to Carmel. The top of the cliff commands an uninterrupted view of the sea, and may be reached from the well in a few minutes. See also Col. Wilson, R.E., in *Bibl. Educ.*, vol. iv. p. 119.

ranged, on one side the king and people, with the prophets of Baal, in their white robes and peaked turbans. On the other, supported only by his single attendant, stood the solitary prophet of Jehovah, his rough sheep-skin mantle over his shoulders, his simple linen tunic held together by a strap of hide, and his long hair hanging down his back, or blown by the mountain breeze. But, though alone, his bearing was that of a king of men, whose orders all present at once almost involuntarily



MT. MANARBAK, THE SUPPOSED SCENE OF ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE.
W. O. P. Medlycott, Pinz.

obeyed. About 25 miles off, on the south-west, rose the city of Jezreel, on its green hill, with Ahab's palace and stately gardens, in which perhaps was Jezebel's temple of Asherah. Close under the hill was the deep bed of the Kishon, at the moment a mere stony gulf, from which the water had long since disappeared.

It was early morning, when Baal was worshipped as the rising sun. Calling to the people, Elijah upbraided them with their fickleness. "How long," asked he,

"will you limp now on one foot and then on the other?" or, as Graetz understands it, will ye hop back and forward like birds, from one perch to another? "If Jehovah be God, follow Him; if Baal, follow him." But the multitude were silent. Every incident that follows is striking. The steps by which the prophet proposes to decide the claims of Jehovah and His idol rival—that an altar should be built for each, to be kindled by fire from heaven, which Baal, the sun-god, could surely, above all others, send most easily; the irony with which he jeers the priests of Baal as they circled, hour after hour, round their altar and sacrifice, in wild Oriental fanaticism, with shrill cries, and frenzied excitement; their hair streaming in the wind, their faces painted; loud savage music adding to the din! "Cry louder,"

¹ The following description of the dance of dervishes in Egypt illustrates that of the priests of Baal which Elijah's words mock:—

"About thirty dervishes stood in a half-circle, bowing themselves backwards and forwards with great energy to the sound of kettle drums and cymbals. Every time they rose upright, a frightful cry broke out from each, 'Allah is good.' These were howling dervishes; but there was also a dancing dervish present. Dressed in white, he stood in the middle of the half-circle, and turned round and round with incredible speed, his arms stretched out to the full. The sheik acted as leader of the whole. The common dervishes seemed vulgar and poor, and were variously clad. The most zealous had long hair hanging loose, which fell over their faces as they bowed, reaching to their feet; then, as they rose, flying back far behind their heads. This lasted a quarter of an hour, the rate of bowing growing always faster, and the noise more and more terrible. One grew dizzy with the sight, and it would have been no surprise had they fallen senseless, as sometimes happens. After a time the leader began reciting a sura of the Koran, to which the others answered with nasal responses. They were all wildly excited." Orelli, *Durch's Heilige Land*. "The modern dervishes, like Baal's priests, when in their highest excitement, often cut themselves with knives and swords till they

said Elijah, as no answer came from morning to noon to their incessant cries of "Ha Baal anænu! Ha Baal anænu!" "Hear us, O Baal!" "He is a god, and must listen to such fervent prayers. But perhaps he has his head full and cannot listen, or is out of the way, or perhaps he is sleeping, and, if so, his servants won't let him be disturbed."¹ Driven to frenzy by such jibes, they broke into still wilder excitement; strove to move the god by cutting themselves with the swords and knives they always carried for the purpose, till the blood streamed over their vestments and limbs; nor did they desist till the time of the evening sacrifice, as the sun was sinking towards the sea in the west.

Then, at last, Elijah, as calm as the priests of Baal had been frenzied, orders them to stand aside;² with his own hands repairs with twelve stones the ruined altar of Jehovah, in memory of the twelve tribes of undivided Israel; makes the people dig a trench round it as broad as a two-peck measure,³ and drench the altar and the sacrifice on it three times with water from the well at hand, till the very trench was full. And now, advancing with calm dignity, he utters loudly in the evening a brief but earnest prayer: "Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that *Thou* art God in Israel, and I Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that Thou, Jehovah, art God, and that what happens has been appointed by Thee,

faint with loss of blood. They also pierce their almost naked bodies with wooden or iron spikes, from which they hang mirrors framed in wood." *Van Lennep*.

¹ Thenius, 1 *B. d. Könige*, c. xviii. v. 27.

² 1 Kings xviii. 30. *Sept.*

³ Two seahs. *Conder*, p. 80.

to turn their hearts back again to Thyself." ¹ "Then," we are told, "the fire of Jehovah fell," consuming not only the sacrifice, but the wood below it, the stones, and the very dust of the altar, and licking up the water in the trench. Such a miracle, at such a time, with such antecedent excitement, awed the vast multitude. Casting themselves on their faces, a universal shout arose, "Jehovah, He is God ! Jehovah, He is God !" Elijah was supreme. His least word, as that of one visibly speaking for the Almighty, was law. His triumph had rekindled in all, the old zeal for the God of their fathers. It was now possible to carry out sternly the Divine proscription of idolaters in Israel. The persecutors had become the victims. Ordering the crowd to seize Baal's priests, and lead them down the hill to the edge of the deep channel of Kishon, Elijah himself and the multitude with him slew them to a man, throwing their corpses, we may suppose, into the bed of the torrent, unburied, to be washed out to sea by the coming storm.

Meanwhile, Ahab, confounded and paralysed, was a passive spectator. He had allowed the massacre of the priests apparently without an effort to save them. A sacrifice was always followed by a feast, and this was now spread on the top of the hill, beside the altar of God ; the king joining in it. Already the partial purification of the land from idolatry had been accepted as a sign of national penitence, and the curse of drought recalled. The sound of abundant rain, as yet unnoticed by others, was heard by the prophet. Retiring to the upper slope of the hill, and casting himself down on the earth, his face between his knees, doubtless in prayer, his attendant, at his command, went out seven times to the edge of the hill, where the view over the sea beneath was

¹ *Thenius*. 1 Kings xviii. 37.

unbroken. The sky was still cloudless; the ocean calm. At last he could report that in the clear air of an Eastern night he saw a small cloud rising out of the waters—the well-known sign in the Levant of a coming storm.¹ Not a moment was to be lost, for the heavens darkened apace, and the sea rose in foam before the driving hurricane. Hastily mounting his chariot, therefore, at the foot of



VIEW FROM CARMEL. W. C. P. Medlycott, Pinz.

the hill, the king drove off in pale haste, while the great plain was yet practicable; to get to Jezreel before the

¹ Luke xii. 54. Emerson, in his *Letters from the Egean*, speaks of a storm which broke on a Greek vessel in which he was—as indicated beforehand, on a clear bright morning, by a small black cloud seen on the verge of the horizon to the south. It spread rapidly over the sky, and the ship only escaped disaster by instantly striking sail, and scudding with bare poles before the hurricane. See also, Col. Wilson, R.E., in *Bibl. Educ.*, vol. ii. p. 214.

wild night flooded the hollows which seamed it in every direction. Through the fierce storm, however, with its darkness and sheets of rain, the way gleaming only by moments before him at each lightning flash, Elijah, Arab like, tightening his belt, ran ahead of the chariot the whole way to Jezreel, as if to guarantee the king's safety, and to show him respect, now he had done his duty. But at the entrance to the town he vanished into the darkness, and was gone. He would not come near Jezebel.¹

¹ The wide diffusion of the worship of Baal is shown by customs which have lingered almost to our own day in Ireland, Wales, and the Highlands of Scotland. Two days in the year—the 1st of May and the 31st October—the spring and the autumn equinoxes, were marked by rites in which fire played a prominent part. In the Highlands of Scotland, so lately as the beginning of this century, on the 1st of May, or Beltane day—"the day of Baal's fire"—the boys of the towns assembled on a moor or open space, and made a round table of the green sod—the counterpart of an ancient altar—by digging a circular trench, and forming the earth thus obtained into a flat heap in the centre. A fire was then kindled new, and on this a custard was prepared, of eggs and milk, and also a cake of oatmeal, which was baked on a stone. After eating the custard, the cake was divided into equal portions, according to the number of the persons present. One of the pieces, however, was daubed with charcoal until perfectly black. All were presently put into a bonnet, from which each boy, after being blindfolded, drew one—the last falling to the share of him who held the bonnet. Whoever drew the black piece was regarded as marked out to be sacrificed to Baal, that the sun-god might be propitious in the season just opening, and multiply the fruits of the earth. The devoted boy was not put to death, however, but was required to leap three times through the fire. Baal in Gaelic means a globe; that is, the sun. In Perthshire there is a village called Tillie-beltane, the hill of the fire of Baal. Near it are the remains of a Druidical temple, and also a well. On the 1st of May a procession used to be formed, the members of which drank water from the well, and then marched nine times round it and the temple—doubtless the traditional equivalent of

The weak king had bent before a stronger will, and had calmly looked on while his priests were being slain, but the sterner nature of his wife was not so easily daunted. "The gods do so to me, and more also, if I make not thy

the circling dances of Baal worship, round the holy well, the altar, and the temple. Sir J. Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland*.

Lieut. Conder, in the *Palestine Fund Statements*, 1881, pp. 80-84, furnishes some interesting facts respecting sun worship in Palestine. Jerome, he tells us, relates that the rites of Tammuz were celebrated at Bethlehem in his own time. The sacred cave there, for many years consecrated as the supposed birthplace of Christ, was, Lieut. Conder supposes, the "chapel," or secret cave "of Moloch;" such a cave playing an important part in sun worship. There is, indeed, always a sacred cave in connection with the traces of sun temples in Syria, as if the ancient idea had been that the sun issued from a cave at its return from the darkness of winter. The Accadian name for the winter solstice month is, indeed, "The Cavern of the Dawn." Temples of Ash-toreth and Chemosh stood on Mount Olivet in Solomon's time, and Lieut. C. recognises a trace of them in a cave or vault beneath a small sanctuary yet remaining on its top. At Bethel there is a curious circle of stones immediately north of the village, reminding one of the rude stone temples of our own country. Traces of a similar circle were found south-east of Jenin, with a rude stone monument which has every appearance of being an ancient altar. The tomb of Joseph is flanked by two pillar-like altars, on which sacrifices are still offered by fire. Even the Jews sacrifice articles by fire at the tomb of Bar Jochai, on the side of Jebel Jermûk, the highest mountain of central Galilee. A rude cromlech in that district is known as "The Stone of Blood." Many sacred stones occur, indeed, through the whole country. On Hermon, the great centre of sun worship, the remains of numerous sun temples have been found by Col. Warren. They all face the rising sun. At Tyre, on an isolated hillock, is a sacred building still called "The Beloved of Women," doubtless from Adonis or Melkarth. The inhabitants of northern Lebanon worship the sun, moon, and elements, even now. "It is not," adds Lieut. C., "too much to say, that every isolated, round, or conical mountain-top in Palestine was once a seat of sun-worship."

life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time," was her instant message to Elijah, on hearing what had happened. The prophet, in the inevitable excitement of the day, had apparently hoped that the triumph of Jehovah would extend from Carmel over the land. But Jezebel's relentless spirit showed him that, while she lived, idolatry would be safe. The revulsion of feeling was instant. A few hours ago, at the head of a vast multitude; the king recognising him as the prophet of God, and yielding up to him, as such, all authority for the time; his life was now in imminent danger. No refuge in all the wide borders of Palestine was safe from the infuriated Jezebel; he must flee beyond its limits. Hurrying south, therefore, with his attendant, the Phœnician widow's son, if Jewish tradition be right, he hastily crossed the country, and, passing through Judah, never rested till he found himself at Beersheba, eighty miles from Jezreel, as the crow flies. There he left his man behind, and set out alone into the waste region still farther south. The overpowering excitement of the last few days, and the fatigue of the rapid flight, had been too much even for his iron frame and strength of mind. Profound despondency had settled on his spirit, and he wandered over the dreary stretches of barren uplands, wishing only to die; for his hope of re-establishing the worship of Jehovah had seemingly failed. Like many a gallant spirit in the hour of dejection, he saw everything in the gloomiest light. The children of Israel had forsaken God's covenant, thrown down His altars, and slain His prophets with the sword. He alone was left, and even he had to flee for his life. But the God he so faithfully served was nigh at hand. He had lain down and fallen asleep under a solitary flowering broom—the special shrub of the desert ravines, where it grows to the

height of ten or twelve feet, and affords a thick and grateful shade.¹ Here, "as he lay and slept" a heavenly vision was twice vouchsafed him, and, waking, he found a cake of meal, baked on hot stones,² and a cruse of water; still the only requirements of a Bedouin. He now determined to go on to the holy mountain of Horeb, and forthwith set out. The distance in a direct line is about 170 miles from Beersheba, but wide detours may have been necessary. Forty days—nearly six weeks—were spent on the journey, during which, we read, he had no food, his strength being doubtless miraculously sustained.³

¹ *Land and Book*, p. 610. *Tristram's Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 360. *Robinson's Bib. Res.*, vol. i. p. 203. It is the "Retem" of the Arabs—the *Retama roetam* of botanists. 1 Kings xix. 5, the Heb. reads "one rotem tree."

² 1 Kings xix. 6. *Sept.*

³ In connection with Elijah's fast, the following paragraph is curious. I need not refer to the disputed case of Dr. Tanner.

"Harriet Duell died in Iowa on Sunday night after a voluntary fast of forty-seven days. She began her fast on the 23rd February. She was fifty-two years old, a hopeless invalid, and determined to end her life by starvation. For the first thirty-three days she did not take even water. After that she took a little water each day till the final one, but nothing else passed her lips. Her pulse on Sunday morning was imperceptible; her respiration thirty-five per minute. She was in full possession of her mental faculties until the last. The post-mortem examination showed that there was extremely little blood in her body. The stomach was void of all substance. The body weighed forty-seven pounds. She was never considered insane by her friends, but merely desperate through suffering."—*Daily News*, April, 1881.

Another case of fasting, for forty-five days—that of Mr. Griscom, of Chicago—has occurred since the above. "He lost during his fast 49½ lbs. Tanner lost in forty days 36½ lbs. On the first day his pulse was 84; temperature, 100. On the last day his pulse was 66; temperature, 98. He did not suffer at all save



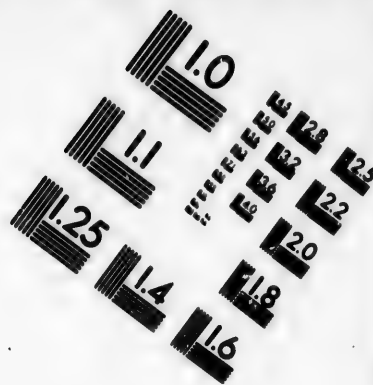
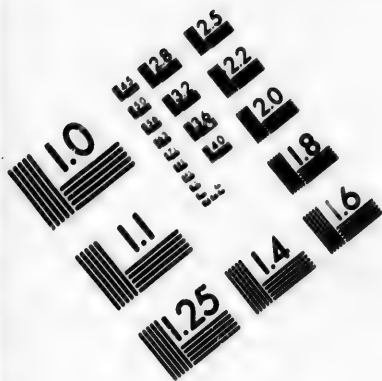
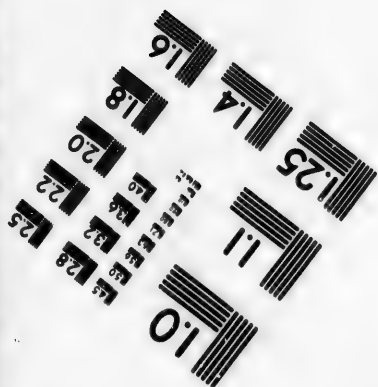
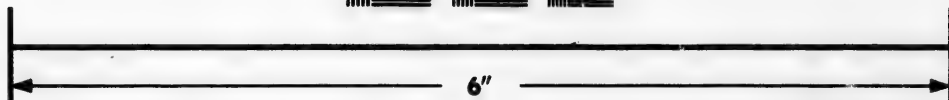
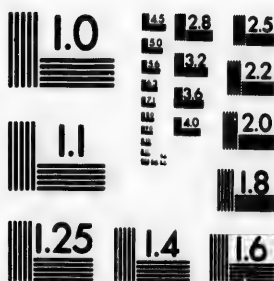


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In the secluded plain below the highest point of Jebel Mûsa, a cave is shown as that in which Elijah sought shelter for the night at Horeb. It was spoken of when the Book of Kings was written as "the cave;" but whether from the fame of the prophet's visit, or as well known before, it is impossible to say. That night another vision was granted him, and the question, divinely prompted, rose in his soul: "What doest thou here, Elijah; away from thy field of work, in this lonely sanctuary of the hills?" He pleaded in justification that he was, as he believed, the sole survivor in Israel of the servants of God, and that even his life was in peril. The Voice, however, directed him to leave the cavern on the morrow, and stand upon the mount, before the Lord, who would pass by.¹ Having done so, God revealed Himself, in all the terror of His most appalling manifestations.² A rushing hurricane, before which Elijah shrank once more into the depths of the cave, burst through the awful gorges of the mountains, tearing off huge granite fragments on every side. Then followed the crash of an earthquake, making the mighty peaks and summits rock and sway on their foundations, and after that the peals of an awful thunderstorm reverberated through the naked defiles; the incessant blaze of Eastern lightning flaming around, and revealing the heights and depths of the rocky wilderness. But Jehovah was in none of these. At last, in the silence almost peculiar to that region, broken by no falling stream, or note of bird,

on the thirty-seventh day, when the excessive heat caused nausea. He took an average of 32 ounces of water in the 24 hours. There is no doubt about the genuineness of the fast. He has been in charge of physicians."—*Daily News*, July 14, 1881.

¹ 1 Kings xix. 11. Sept. and lit. rendering of Hebrew.

² Exod. xxxiv. 6. Grove's art. *Elijah*, *Dict. of Bible*.

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or sound of beast, or voice of man, came "a still small voice." What it was is not told us, but Elijah at once felt that the decisive moment had arrived. Wrapping his face in his sheepskin mantle, and once more going out to the mouth of the cave, he stood, awestruck, to hear.¹ Once more the question is asked, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and once more the same answer is returned. Meanwhile he had learned a great lesson. Till now he had thought only of the more terrible attributes of Omnipotence in connection with God—the tempest, the earthquake, the lightnings of His wrath. But he had been taught that he was henceforth to recognise the gentler aspects of the Almighty—the still small voice—as His chosen symbol. He himself had hidden from the former, but had instinctively veiled his face before the latter. God was gentle and tender as well as just and stern. Work, not timid flight, was Elijah's vocation, as it is that of all true men. Three commands were given him. Hazael was to be anointed king of Syria, instead of Benhadad; Jehu, the son of Nimshi, king of Israel instead of Ahab; and Elisha, the son of Shaphat, was to be set apart as his own successor.² He was cheered, moreover, with the intimation, that though he thought himself the only servant of Jehovah left in Israel, there were still, unknown to him, but known to God, 7,000 who had not bowed the knee or kissed the hand to Baal. Through them, and the successor to his office, who would be raised up, the interests of the truth would be defended and promoted, from generation to generation, till He came, in whom the still small voice which would not strive or cry, or be heard in the streets, would lead the kingdom of God to final and eternal triumph.³

¹ *Elijah, Dict. of Bible. Stanley's Jewish Church, vol. ii. p. 260.*

² 1 Kings xix. 15-17.

³ Matt. xii. 19, 20.

The anointing of Hazael and Jehu was reserved for Elisha, the successor of Elijah, but the selection of Elisha himself was made by the great prophet. Leaving Horeb, in obedience to the Divine command, he passed up the Jordan valley, in all probability to escape notice by thus choosing the sunken route of the Ghor. His loneliness may have awakened a desire for companionship, now that he was growing old, and a friend was graciously provided. At Abel-Meholah—"the meadow of the dance"—a broader part of the Ghor, as Jerome informs us, ten miles south of Bethshean, there lived the local judge,¹ or Shaphat, a man, as his office implied, of solid position in the community. Like his neighbours, he farmed his land, and his son, Elisha, at the moment of Elijah's passing was actually ploughing. "Twelve yoke," it is said, "were before him,"—an expression which may either mean that twelve "yoke" of land, the yoke being as much as two oxen could plough in a day—were already ploughed, and he was busy with the last,² or that eleven ploughs were at work under his father's slaves, while he himself guided a twelfth. Elijah was apparently on the other side of the river, but passed over³ to him; or it may be he went only from the path into the field.⁴ Going up to Elisha, he threw over him his sheepskin mantle⁵—the recognised summons to the

¹ Shaphat = judge. It is the usual word for a "judge."

² Ewald thinks this, but Thenius and Keil fancy there were eleven ploughs besides that of Elisha. If so, the farm must have been a large one. See also *Land and Book*, p. 144.

³ Hebrew.

⁴ Grove supposes the former; Thenius the latter.

⁵ The Persian Sufis—Mahommedan priests—when in expectation of death, select a favourite pupil, and appoint him their successor by bequeathing him their cloak or other upper garment. Brahmins are invested with the priestly character by having a

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prophetic office, as a son or disciple. As in the case in the gospel,¹ there was a moment's hesitation, but Elijah must have felt the sincerity of the request that followed, for he did not refuse to grant it. With him, as with our Lord, no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, was fit for the kingdom of God; yet there was no real looking back in Elisha's case, but simply the honest utterance of a dutiful heart. "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and mother, and I will follow thee."² "Go," said Elijah, "go back and do it: what I have done in no way conflicts with your performance of filial duty;³ but remember that thou art consecrated to God."⁴ Returning home, therefore, for the moment, he hastily bade his father's household farewell. Then, after offering the pair of oxen with which he had been ploughing, as a sacrifice of thanks and devotion to Him whose public servant he had now become, and making a parting feast of the flesh to his father's people, he left the well-to-do homestead behind, and followed Elijah; to be henceforth his "minister"⁵ or servant, and companion.

yellow mantle thrown across their shoulders, and bound round the waist by a sacred cord.

¹ Luke ix. 61.

² Hebrew.

³ *Keil*.

⁴ *Thenius*.

⁵ The same word as is used of Joshua in his relations to Moses. *Exod. xxiv. 13.* Of Abishag to David. *1 Kings i. 15.* It is sometimes translated "servant." *Exod. xxxiii. 11.*





CHAPTER IV.

ISRAEL UNDER AHAB AND AHAZIAH.¹

B.C. 919-897 AND B.C. 897-895.

THE history of Elijah now, for a time, breaks off. Hiding somewhere, in security, from Ahab and Jezebel, he ceased to take a prominent part in the progress of events. After what he had seen on Carmel, Ahab may, also, perhaps, have intermitted his persecution of the servants of Jehovah, for we find the schools of the prophets flourishing in these years, without disturbance from without, at Bethel, Jericho, and Gilgal. It may be the secret of this toleration lay in part, however, in the deterioration of the order itself, for we shall ere long find that only one of this great brotherhood—Micaiah, the son of Imlah²—remained firmly opposed to the House of Omri. But Ahab had had trouble enough with prophets to deal more gently even with one who always predicted evil in his case, and contented himself with keeping Micaiah in prison.³

Meanwhile political affairs had become overclouded. The king of Syria,⁴ Benhadad II., whose capital was

¹ ASSYRIAN KINGS.—Tiglath Adar II., B.C. 889-884. Assurnazirhabal, 883-859. Shalmaneser II., 858-823.

² 1 Kings xxii. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, ver. 8, 18, 26.

⁴ "Syria" was originally a contraction of "Assyria," and in its

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Damascus, had rapidly become the most powerful monarch west of the Euphrates, and was head of a great confederacy of no fewer than thirty-two tributary kings, bound to serve him in war;¹ Hamath, on the Orontes, being the second State in the league. Followed by his vassals, he overran the territories of Ahab, apparently availing himself of the weakness that must have followed the drought and famine, and the confusion that reigned through the religious persecution. Large districts were speedily subdued, and Samaria itself so severely straitened that Ahab was forced to sue for peace. Benhadad, however, was over-confident in his arms, and proposed terms to which the inhabitants would not submit. Not only was all the silver and gold in the city demanded; the royal harem and the king's children must be surrendered. The poorer houses would be spared, but the palace and the residences of the courtiers were to be at Benhadad's mercy. Ahab, thoroughly overawed by the success and truculent harshness of his enemy, was ready to listen even to such humiliating terms, but the elders of the city and the mass of the people would not permit him. The Syrian was therefore told that the gold and silver, and even the wives and children, would be given up, but the houses of the nobles could not be plundered. A boastful reply to this, threatened the utter destruction of Samaria. The force attacking it would be so great that when its walls and houses were burnt to ashes, there would not be a handful for each of the soldiers assailing them. "Let not him who girds on his armour," replied Ahab spiritedly, "boast himself as he that putteth it

widest sense was equivalent to Aram—the whole vast region bounded by the great mountain chain of Taurus, and extending from Asia Minor in the north to the Euphrates on the east and Arabia on the south.

¹ 1 Kings xx. 1, 16.

off." Meanwhile, a prophet, with a courage worthy of his order, true to the national spirit, and faithful to God, encouraged the king, by assuring him that Benhadad would be defeated. By his directions the servants of the country chieftains who had fled into Samaria, and the men-at-arms then in the city—in all only about 7,000 combatants—were mustered, and sent out in a vigorous sally at noon, when they would be least expected. Troops had already been drawn out to storm the town, but Benhadad and his great men were enjoying themselves during the heat of the day by a carousal in the tents, or booths of branches and boughs, which had been extemporized for them, as is still the custom in Eastern campaigns. Word hurriedly sent, announcing the sally, could not rouse him from his debauch. Those who dared to attack him were to be taken alive and brought to his presence. An army thus led was, however, an easy prey to a fierce assault. Disconcerted by the vigour of the Israelites, the force detailed to storm the city turned and fled; and the panic spread so quickly through the whole army, that Benhadad barely escaped, on horseback, with some of his cavalry,¹ leaving his chariots and camp in the hands of Ahab.

Such a power as that of Damascus was not likely, however, to submit to a humiliating defeat. It was due, said the courtiers, to the God of Israel being a mountain God; had the battle been fought on the lowlands, the result would have been different. A new army exactly like that which had been dispersed was, therefore, raised, and marched into the great plain of Esdraelon in the opening of the fighting season, next year. The town of Aphek,² on Mount Gilboa, now the village of Fukū'a, lay in the rear; their wide array filling all the

¹ 1 Kings xx. 1-21.

² *Land and Book*, p. 388.

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eastern end of the plain. But Ahab had been forewarned by a prophet that this new invasion would take place, and was prepared for it. Dividing his force in two, he kept them for seven days on the heights near at hand, waiting a favourable moment for attack. Compared with their assailants, they seemed on the mountain sides like two flocks of goats, while the invaders appeared to cover the country. But they were strong in the remembrance of their last year's victory, and, watching the right moment, swooped down on the Syrians with such vehemence as drove all before them. The slaughter was once more terrible, and Benhadad had again to flee. This time, however, he could get no farther than Aphek, which Ahab at once attacked. A vast number perished in the defence of the wall, which was at last carried and levelled with the ground;¹ if, indeed, it did not fall through an earthquake or by undermining. Benhadad himself fled from house to house as the victors pressed into the town, but at last had to plead, in his turn, for peace. Putting on sackcloth, and throwing rope halters round their necks,² his courtiers came humbly to the conqueror, craving for Benhadad that his life might be spared. It was one of the decisive moments on which the whole future of a country depends. An opportunity had been given to crush to the dust the threatening power of Syria. Honour, interest, policy, and respect for the national party and the prophets, alike urged Ahab

¹ The wall may have fallen by an earthquake, as some suppose, God sending it miraculously; though with such a man as Ahab in command of Israel, this could only be for the vindication of the Divine power. Ewald thinks the 27,000 perished in the ruins of the city; Thenius that the wall was undermined—a part of the enemy enticed to it, and that the walls then sank under their weight.

² In similar cases among the Turks, swords are hung from the halters. *A. u. N. Morgenland*, vol. iii. p. 200.

to press his advantage to the uttermost. But his habitual weakness, incapacity, love of ease, aversion to the honourable cares and duties of his position, fear of pushing matters to extremity with so powerful a kingdom, and perhaps, also, the hope of securing a strong alliance against the Assyrians, who threatened the future of all Western Asia, turned the scales disastrously for Israel. Flattered by an appeal for his life from so powerful an enemy, he at once showed his weakness, asking if Benhadad were still alive, and calling him his brother. Emboldened by so favourable an omen, the envoy hastened to follow it up by an appeal to his brotherly sympathy. An invitation to bring the king followed, and, on his appearance, a place was given him in the royal chariot, beside Ahab. He was of course profuse in his offers of goodwill. He would give back the towns of Israel taken in the past by Syria, and would let Israel have bazaars in Damascus as the Syrians had had in Samaria.¹ A treaty of peace on this easy footing was forthwith made, and Benhadad allowed to return to Damascus, with his power and empire unimpaired—to laugh at the simplicity of his conqueror and to plan revenge.²

Such folly on Ahab's part met with a speedy rebuke.³ A prophet, wounded and bleeding, his face and head covered with his mantle, and strewed with ashes in token of profound grief, suddenly stood before him. Beginning a ready tale, he stated that while he had been in

¹ The expression is, to have "streets" in Damascus. This may be illustrated, perhaps, by the condition imposed on Constantinople by the Sultan Bajazet, that the Turks should have a street in that city in which they might live under their own judge, and retain their own religion and laws. Many Turks, as the result of this, forthwith came to live in Constantinople.

² 1 Kings xx. 24-34.

³ 1 Kings xx. 35-43.

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the battle a captain had brought a prisoner to him, with the strictest orders, on pain of death or a heavy fine, not to let him escape. While the speaker, however, had been looking this way and that, the prisoner had fled. What was to be done? "You have yourself," replied Ahab, "pronounced the just judgment in your case." On this, throwing off the covering from his face, the prophet suddenly revealed himself, and told the king in ominous words that as he had suffered a man to escape whom Jehovah had devoted to utter destruction, his own life would be taken instead; his people also perishing for the Syrians whom he had let go free. The star of the house of Omri was sinking. Ahab returned to Samaria, indignant at the prophet and displeased with himself. But he soon forgot all in the presence of Jezebel.

A great change had meanwhile come in the affairs of Western Asia, involving the whole future of its various nations and states. Ever since the days of Solomon, the kingdom founded by the dynasty of Rezin at Damascus, had been the terrible and inveterate foe of Israel. In each reign Syrian wars had threatened or burst on the land, spreading distress and dismay. Now, however, a power which had once been supreme from the Tigris to the Mediterranean, but had for nearly two hundred years been crippled and harmless, again alarmed these wide regions by a display of fresh vigour and aggressive designs. Under Tiglath-pileser I., about B.C. 1100, the rule of Assyria had stretched from Kurdistan to the Grecian Archipelago, including the whole of Lebanon and Phenicia. But a strong league of the Hittite kings of Syria had effectually humbled it, and torn away from the successors of the great king all his dominions on this side of the Euphrates. To this had been due the possibility of the empire of David and Solomon, and

that of the Syrians at Damascus. Egypt, distracted by a struggle between the priestly kings of Thebes and the kings of the 21st dynasty, at Tanis, in the Delta, could not disturb Palestine or Western Asia by any attempt to avail themselves of the eclipse of Assyrian power, to regain the old conquests of Thothmes III., or Rameses II. Babylon, moreover, profited by the opportunity to strike for its ancient independence, throwing off the Assyrian yoke, and even taking possession of the districts south of Nineveh.

After a hundred and fifty years of obscurity, however, Assyria once more, in the middle of the ninth century B.C., under its warlike king, Assur-nazirhabal, entered on a career of conquest, and cleared its home territories of their Babylonish garrisons. He was succeeded by his son Shalmaneser II., who proved the Napoleon of his day. After conquering Babylonia, he marched in triumph to the shores of the Persian gulf, and exacted tribute from the petty kings of Chaldaea.¹ But these triumphs only kindled his military ardour. He now determined to extend his empire to the ancient grandeur it had obtained under Tiglath-pileser I. The kingdom of Damascus and the monarchies and states of Palestine were thus in imminent danger. A new era of mortal struggle for existence had come to them—a struggle only to end, after an agony of more than a hundred years, in the destruction of Damascus and Samaria, and the degrading vassalage of all the nations from the Tigris to the Levant. Henceforth all Western Asia trembled at the name of Assyria. The heavens were black with tempests, driving, with only momentary lulls, across the whole sweep of Syria and Palestine.

¹ Layard, *Inscrip.*, pl. 46, 47. *Western Asiatic Inscrip.*, III. pl. 7, 8.

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Under these circumstances, the single hope of the countries threatened lay in their putting aside all mutual quarrels and uniting against Assyria. One important result of the inglorious peace of Ahab with Benhadad was, therefore, the adherence of the former to a league of the kings and princes of Palestine and Syria, under the supremacy of Benhadad, against Shalmaneser. Nor was the alliance long allowed to be merely formal. The king of Assyria, Shalmaneser II., eager to widen his empire, invaded Hamath, one of the States of the league, and all its forces were called out to resist him. An Assyrian inscription¹ informs us that Benhadad, as commander of the confederates, led into battle 1,200 chariots, 1,200 cavalry, and 20,000 infantry of his own army; 700 chariots, 7,000 horse and 10,000 foot of Hamath; 2,000 chariots of Ahab and 10,000 foot; 500 foot soldiers of the Guites;² 1,000 Egyptians; 10 chariots and 10,000 infantry of Irkanat; 200 men of Arvad; 200 from Usanat; 30 chariots and 10,000 men of Sizan; 1,000 camels of Gindibah of Arba; and a contingent from the king of Ammon. "These twelve kings," says Shalmaneser, "brought help to one another, and came against me to war and battle. Through the high powers given me by Assur, the Lord, and the mighty weapons of the god Nergal who goes before me, I fought with them, and put them to rout from the city of Karkar to the city of Gilzan. I slew 14,000 of their armed men. Like the air-god Ben, I poured a flood over them. I filled the waters with them in their flight, and laid low all their armed host. The whole country was not enough to hold

¹ On the monolith found at Kurkh. Translated by Sayce. *Records of the Past*, vol. i, pp. 99, 100. Menant, *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 112.

² Unknown.

their dead bodies. I pursued them to the river Orontes, and captured on the way their chariots, their cavalry, and their baggage.¹ But the victory had been dearly bought, for Shalmaneser presently retreated.² Assyria had now, however, fairly entered on her policy of subduing Western Syria. One of its kings had invaded Phenicia twenty years before, and forced its cities to pay him tribute, and Shalmaneser was destined to attack Benhadad again three times in the eight years following his doubtful triumph on the Orontes.³

The chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah is hardly as yet quite settled. Ewald, Schenkel, Riehm,



HELMETS, AND STYLE OF WEARING THE HAIR IN THE ASSYRIAN ARMY.

Conder, Winer, and Maspero alike give a date to Ahab which makes him fifty years earlier than Shalmaneser II., who, however, from the indisputable testimony of his inscriptions, fought against him.⁴

It must have been soon after this, and about four years before Ahab's death, that his last meeting with Elijah took place. On the eastern slope⁵ of the hill of Jezreel,

¹ Sayce, and Menant.

² Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften*, p. 98.

³ Schrader, *ibid.*, p. 310. Menant gives the dates of his campaigns against Benhadad as B.C. 855, 851, 850, and 848. In each Shalmaneser, of course, claims the victory.

⁴ Schrader gives the date of Shalmaneser's reign as B.C. 858-824.

⁵ 2 Kings ix. 30-36; 1 Kings xxi. 1, 18.

close to the city wall, along which one side of the palace of Ahab ran,¹ was a vineyard which had been owned for generations by the family of one Naboth, a man of substance and position in the city. Disliking to see the ground of a private citizen so near, Ahab had determined to get possession of this if possible, that he might turn it into a garden of herbs. But Naboth, with the sturdy independence of a Jewish landowner, was unwilling to sell it; a religious scruple, perhaps, strengthening his objection to part with ground which he had inherited from his forefathers.² The rights of proprietors could not be lightly invaded. Omri had formally bought the hill of Samaria, and David the threshing-floor of Araunah. It seemed as if the king must yield, and to do so fretted his self-love and made him heavy and displeased. Like a petted child when crossed, he threw himself moodily on his bed and refused to eat.

If he, however, was cowed and beaten, Jezebel his wife was not. He had some scruples; she, none. That any one should dare to refuse to gratify the king was an

¹ 2 Kings ix. 30. It is a matter of dispute whether Naboth's vineyard was at Jezreel or at Samaria. He was a Jezreelite, and owned a piece of land on the eastern slope of the hill of Jezreel. 2 Kings ix. 25, 26. He also had a vineyard, of which the situation is uncertain. The Heb. text (1 Kings xxi. 1) states that it was in Jezreel; but the Sept. omits the words "which was in Jezreel," and instead of "the palace," reads "the threshing-floor of Ahab, King of Samaria." But a threshing-floor, translated in our version "void place" (1 Kings xxii. 10), did actually exist before the gate of Samaria.

² Land was really held among the Hebrews in a strict entail for their posterity. Its alienation was forbidden by the law. Lev. xxv. 23.

* The word "goran" occurs thirty-five times in the Old Testament, and is almost always translated "threshing-floor," or "floor."

insult to the throne. If Ahab really wanted the vineyard, she would get it for him. Writing a letter in his name, and duly authenticated by the royal seal, to the elders and chief men of Samaria, she commanded them to proclaim a fast, as at the occurrence of some great public calamity. High treason had been committed, and the wrath of the gods must be deprecated. Naboth was to be put at the head of the assembly,¹ and when thus brought into prominent notice, was to be accused as the criminal, by hired false witnesses, so common in all ages in the East. It was to be asserted that he had cursed God and the king. His only offence, of course, had been keeping his own property when Ahab wished him to sell it. Largely dependent on the court, and daunted by the fierce energy and unscrupulousness of Jezebel, the elders had not spirit to resist, and carried out her murderous plan. Naboth, having been charged with the crime, was at once condemned, and forthwith hurried outside the town walls by night and stoned to death, his sons also sharing his fate, for they too must be destroyed to secure the vineyard.² To add iniquity to the murders, the mangled bodies were left unburied, the greatest insult that could be paid to the dead. Worse still, the prowling dogs and swine³ of the town were allowed to devour them; and it was noticed that the blood ran into a tank at hand, which was the common bathing place of the prostitutes of the temple of Baal.⁴

The long seclusion of Elijah had apparently made Ahab almost forget him, or fancy that he was, at last, fortunately dead. But he found to his dismay that he was still alive. The news of Naboth's death had been brought to her husband at once by Jezebel; and though

¹ Josephus.

² Sept.

³ 2 Kings ix. 26. Yesterday = yesternight.

⁴ 1 Kings xxi. 19; xxii. 38. Sept.

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he had not had the courage to commit the crime, he was willing enough to enjoy its results. Calling his chariot, therefore, he rode off to the vineyard, attended by two officers, Jehu and Bidkar, in a second chariot,¹ to take possession of his ill-gotten spoil. He had done so, and was riding cheerily home again, when the dreaded apparition of Elijah stopped the way. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" gasped the king. "I have found thee," replied the prophet, and proceeded to announce that his apostasy and crimes would be punished by the total destruction of his House. As to himself, moreover, the town dogs would lick up his blood in the same place as they had licked that of Naboth, and the temple prostitutes would wash themselves in it as they bathed in the tank.² Nor would Jezebel escape. The dogs would devour her under the wall of Jezreel, and her sons, sharing a similar fate, would be left to the dogs and the vultures.³ Appalled by such a curse, Ahab rode back to Samaria gloomy and alarmed. Rending his clothes, putting on rough sackcloth, and even sleeping in it; refusing food and bearing himself with broken contrition—only, however, too short-lived—the doom was held back for a generation.

The defeat of Benhadad in various contests with Assyria, had emboldened Ahab to break his league with him, after three years of peace; the surrender of Ramoth Gilead, one of the towns Syria had agreed to give back to Israel, being still deferred. He was now in the twenty-second year of his reign; his southern neighbour, Jehoshaphat, being four years his junior as king. The policy of Omri, begun with Asa, had been continued by their sons. Instead of war, the most friendly relations

¹ 2 Kings ix. 25.

² 1 Kings xxi. 19. *Sept.*

³ 1 Kings xxi. 24.

had been cultivated, though Jehoshaphat was as zealous for Jehovah as Ahab and Jezebel for Baal. The wish for mutual safety by union was undoubtedly the great motive for the alliance, but it was regarded with unfavourable eyes by the prophets and more thoughtful citizens of Judah.¹ A visit of the southern king to his northern brother was now, however, arranged; and for the first time since the division of the monarchy, a king of Judah was a guest of a king of Israel. Delighted with this proof of confidence, Jehoshaphat's entrance to Samaria was celebrated by Ahab with great rejoicings and public festivities; and the two appeared together from time to time, in state, before the people. Resolved to get possession of Ramoth, but afraid to undertake the campaign alone, Ahab felt that this royal visit was an excellent opportunity for securing help, and proposed that Jehoshaphat should join him; nor did he feel free to refuse. The southern king, however, while ready to join in strict alliance with his brother of Israel, was too religious to think of acting without Divine sanction given through the prophets. No fewer than 400 having therefore been collected, a favourable answer was at once given by them to Ahab. Something, however, had roused the suspicions of Jehoshaphat; for a courtly desire to stand well with the king had already corrupted the order to a large extent, and made their utterances false and misleading. One day, therefore, when both kings sat on their thrones in full armour,² at the open space outside the gate of Samaria,³ where the troops were mustered, the crowd of prophets was once more brought before them, but they only repeated the assurance of victory already given. One, indeed, went so far as to put on his forehead horns of

¹ 2 Chron. xx. 35.

² Ewald, vol. iii. p. 538.

³ *Land and Book*, p. 27.

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iron, and push, ox-like, with them, as a sign that Ahab, the bull of Ephraim, would drive the Syrians before him. Still Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. "Was there no other prophet of Jehovah?" There was only one, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, but he always prophesied evil of the king. To please Jehoshaphat, however, he was sent for, and brought from the prison into which Ahab had thrown him at an earlier date. But even he at first prophesied success. Yet it was evident he was not in earnest. He had refused to mould his answer to the king's wishes, or to speak otherwise than Jehovah dictated; and now, on being adjured to tell all his mind, delivered a gloomy foreboding of defeat and death. "I saw all Israel," said he, "scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have not a shepherd, and Jehovah said, These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace." Ahab's conviction that no good would be foretold to him was fulfilled; his death was predicted. Nor was this all. Micaiah added that he saw a vision in which the spirit that leads men astray had come from before God to entice Ahab to his ruin, and that it had entered into the 400 prophets for this end. Infuriated at such an exposure, Zedekiah, the prophet who had pretended to gore those round him with the iron horns, struck Micaiah on the cheek, asking him, as he did so, how he durst say that the spirit of true prophecy had departed from him and been given to himself. The striker was the court favourite; the prophet struck, a man despised and maltreated; but he sternly answered that the proof would be seen when Zedekiah, after the victory of the Syrians, would eagerly hide in an inner chamber to escape. Unpleasant truth is ever more unwelcome, however, than flattering falsehood, and Micaiah was instantly handed over again to the governor of the city and the official in charge of

prisoners, Joash, the king's son—with orders to give him only bread and water, and that as sparingly as would keep him alive,¹ till the king should return in peace. "If ever you return in peace," retorted Micaiah, as they led him off, "Jehovah has not spoken by me."

But the gloomy prediction proved only too true. The march of the allied armies of Israel and Judah forthwith began, and they soon came up with the Syrian forces. Resolved to avenge himself for his humiliation by Ahab, Benhadad had given orders to his chariot officers to make straight for him in the battle, and be sure, above all things, of killing him or taking him alive. The struggle took place outside Ramoth Gilead; but Ahab, having apparently learned the design of the enemy, disguised himself before entering the battle. Jehoshaphat had retained his kingly armour and ornaments, but his death would have provoked a permanent feud with Judah which Benhadad wished to avoid. When, therefore, his chariot force had surrounded the only figure they saw that seemed like Ahab's, it was enough that Jehoshaphat called his name aloud to have his pursuers turn aside. But no disguise could avail the doomed king of Israel. A chance arrow, fired without an aim, struck him between the breast and the lower plates of his armour, sinking deep into his body. He would not, however, yield. Stanching the blood as he best could, he resolutely held himself up in his chariot during the battle, lest his disappearance should dispirit his men. But the flow of blood went on apace, till there was a pool in the hollow of the chariot, and at last, as evening approached, he swooned and died. He had been nobler in death than at any moment in his life.

With Ahab's death, the war was at once virtually ended.

¹ Hebrew. 1 Kings xxii. 27.

As the sun set, and the news ran through the host, a cry rose, "Every man to his own city and his own place!" and the army forthwith melted away. The corpse, brought back to Samaria, was duly buried in the royal tomb. Micaiah had been vindicated. Nor had the words of Elijah fallen to the ground. The chariot was taken to the town pool, the blood dripping from it and from the armour as they were being cleansed, and running back into the tank. Such a sight was naturally long remembered, and men told their sons how the dogs were noticed licking up the dead king's blood, and how, when the temple courtesans shamelessly bathed in the pool next morning, its waters were still tinged with red.

Ahab was peaceably succeeded by his son Ahaziah, the first case in the northern kingdom of the third generation of a dynasty ascending the throne. Able and enterprising, the new sovereign might have left his mark in history but for his untimely end, after a reign of only two years. The death of his father at Ramoth Gilead had left the whole country east of the Jordan at the mercy of the Syrians, and had so weakened his hold on Moab that it refused to pay any longer the yearly tribute of 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams, with their wool, which had been exacted from it for fully eighty years.¹ Details of a period so remote very rarely survive;² but, fortunately, the discovery of the Moabite Stone in recent years has thrown a light as interesting as it was unexpected on this passage of history.

The name of the king of Moab at this time, as we learn both from the Moabite relic and from the Bible, was Mesha. His father, he tells us, had reigned thirty years, and had paid the tribute exacted from him by

¹ 2 Kings iii. 4, 5.

² About B.C. 890. *Ginsburg.*

Israel. The country, though not so large as the county of Huntingdon,¹ was so prosperous that its half-nomadic shepherd population had not only borne this enormous tax—thanks to the rich upland pastures of the Mishor—but had accumulated great wealth, as shown by the immense plunder seized by Jehoshaphat a few years later, after their defeat at Berachah.² The impost, however, must nevertheless have been alike burdensome and galling; even Mesha himself, as the greatest sheep-master of Moab, having doubtless to pay heavily from the crown flocks. The crisis in Israel at the death of Ahab was therefore seized as a favourable moment to strike for independence.

The story of this old-world struggle, as disclosed by the Moabite Stone, is intensely interesting.³ At the accession of Mesha, an Israelite garrison lay hardly a day's march from Korcha, the northern capital of Moab. It had formerly been posted by Omri in Medeba; but latterly, it would seem, had been removed to Ataroth, and had for its duty, to see that the tribute was duly paid. On the south, the mountaineers of Edom, now dependent on Jehoshaphat and acting with him as an ally of Israel, had seized the Moabite town of Horonaim, and harassed the whole country from that point. At last, however, the oracle of Chemosh had announced that the god would be gracious to his people and temple, and would utterly destroy Israel, their oppressor, and for a time it looked as if the prediction would come true.

¹ Moab, in *Dict. of the Bible*. Mesha was a "Dibonite." See Josh. xiii. 9. His father, he tells us, reigned 30 years.

² 2 Chron. xx. 25.

³ See Essay of Schlottman, in *Studien und Kritiken*, 1871, pp. 571 ff. Translation by MM. Clermont Ganneau and E. Renan. *Notice des Monuments, etc., Conservés au Musée du Louvre*. Paris, 1879. Translation of Ginsburg, London, 1871.

"Then," says the Stone, "rose Omri, king of Israel,
 And oppressed Moab many days;
 For Chemosh was wroth with his land.
 And Omri's son followed, and he also said:
 'I will oppress Moab.'
 In my days [those of Mesha] spoke Chemosh:¹
 'I will once more look favourably' on Moab and its temple,
 And Israel will perish for ever.'²
 And Omri seized the district of Me'aba,
 And Israel held it in his days and in those of his son forty years.
 But Chemosh looked graciously on Moab in my days."³

With Ahab's death, the whole district north of the Arnon, claimed from the time of Joshua's conquest by Moab, had passed into Mesha's hands, and the confusion in the northern Hebrew kingdom emboldened him to proclaim his independence of Ahaziah, Ahab's successor. So rich a territory and so heavy a tribute were not, however, to be lightly surrendered, and the opening of the new reign was marked by a campaign to recover the one and enforce the other. From some unknown cause, this failed. Meanwhile, the Edomites were driven from the south, and Mesha, in the fulness of his heart at his triumph, built a high place⁴ in Korchah, to Chemosh, the national god, who, as he believed, "had delivered him from all his enemies, and had let him see his desire on all them that hated him."⁵

Ahaziah returned to Samaria full, no doubt, of plans for the further prosecution of the war, but Providence

¹ "I (Ahab) will oppress Moab in my days. I will lord over it and humiliate it—its king and his house. But Israel was ruined, ruined for ever." *O. G. and R.*

² "I (Ahab) will see my desire on." *G.*

³ "Israel (said) I shall destroy it." *G.*

⁴ "But Chemosh has caused him to perish in my time." *Ganneau and Renan.*

⁵ "Erected this stone of salvation." *Ginsburg.* See 1 Sam. vii. 12; Ps. cxviii. 7.

⁶ Moabite Stone.

had another fate in store for him. The upper windows of Eastern houses often project one or two feet, to form a pleasant look-out and a quiet lounge, a seat running along inside the lattice which serves instead of glass in so hot a climate. While resting on this couch, Ahaziah, by some misadventure—perhaps by inadvertently leaning against the lattice when it was not fastened—fell out into the street below, and was picked up only to be carried to his bed, whence he never rose. Anxious to live, however, but trained by his mother Jezebel in the worship of Baal only, he wearied to know what was before him, and fancied he might do so by inquiring of the oracle of a famous local god. A deputation was therefore sent to the shrine of Baalzebub, a Philistine god, at Ekron, on the Maritime Plain, forty miles south-west from Samaria, in a straight line over the hills. The name, since New Testament times, has been used as that of "the prince of the devils,"¹ but was venerated in Ahaziah's day as connected with an oracle specially in repute for its prophetic powers; Baalzebub himself being worshipped either as the averter of insect plagues, such as flies and locusts, so hurtful in the East, or possibly in the form of a huge fly, or of the scarabæus beetle, sacred among the Egyptians.² The Scripture narrative informs us, however, of the ignominious end of this mission, to rebuke which Elijah reappeared for almost the last time. The repeated efforts of Ahaziah to arrest him; the lightning terrors by which, once and again, he was saved; his final journey to Samaria with the awed soldiers, sent a third time to Carmel to secure him; his stern intimation to Ahaziah, face to face, that as a punishment for having slighted Jehovah, and consulted a Philistine

¹ Matt. ix. 34; xii. 24, 27. Lenormant's *Divination*, p. 95.

² *Baalzebub*, in Herzog and Winer. See vol. ii. pp. 142-3; vol. iii. p. 356.

idol, he would certainly die, are in striking harmony with all his previous life; the enemy of the house of Ahab, the prophet of judgment, the man of mysterious appearances and vanishing.¹

The Moabite Stone has some allusions to Ahaziah's campaign. Encouraged by the promise of the oracle, Mesha fortified the town of Baalmeon, a few hours north of his capital, Korchah, and from this stronghold attacked Ataroth, which lay two hours south-west, and Nebo, which was about the same distance to the north-west; these towns being the bulwarks of the Hebrew power north of the Arnon. Both fell before Mesha's soldiers, and all the population were put to death in honour of Chemosh. It was this incident, especially, which had roused Ahaziah and led to his march across the Jordan, where he fortified himself in Jahaz, a few hours from Korchah. His further action was, however, in some way checked, perhaps by a sudden attack of the Syrians, and he was compelled to withdraw. Mesha now, as he thought by the aid of Chemosh, took possession of Jahaz, and the task of freeing the country was complete.

"I fortified Baalmeon," says he, "and made ditches round it. And I built the town Kirjathaim. And men of Gad had lived for generations in the district of Ataroth, and the king of Israel had fortified the town. And I fought against the town, and took it, and put to death all the men of the town, to please Chemosh, the god of Moab. And I took thence the sacred vessels of Jehovah, and offered them² before the face of Chemosh, in Kirjath. And I put men from Schiran and Schararath³ into it, to live in it.

¹ 2 Kings i. *Studien und Kritiken*, 1837, p. 912.

² "Dragged them on the earth." *Ganneau and Renan*.

³ "Saron and Maharonth." *Ganneau and Renan*.

"And Chemosh said to me: Go up; take the town Nebo from Israel. And I went up during the night, and fought against it from the dawn of the morning red to noonday, and took it, and put to death¹ all its population—seven princes of tribes . . . women and maidens. For I devoted them to Ashtar² Chemosh. And I took thence the sacred vessels of Jehovah, and offered them³ before Chemosh. And the king of Israel had fortified Jahaz, and occupied it, and fought with me; but Chemosh drove him from before my face. And I took out of Moab 200 men in all, and I besieged⁴ Jahaz, and took it, uniting it with Dibon."

Mesha next recounts the buildings which he erected, beginning with those in Korcha. He took measures to strengthen its walls, gates, and towers; adorned it with a royal palace;⁵ and made new reservoirs to provide it with water in case of a siege; requiring, besides, that the inhabitants should have private cisterns of their own.⁶ He appears, moreover, to have driven out of Korcha all the hated Israelites who had previously lived in it, refusing them permission to remain there any longer. Other towns, all north of the Arnon, also received embellishment at his hands. "I built Aroer and made a military road along (the north side of) the Arnon.⁷ I

¹ There is a gap here in the translation of Schlottman. As deciphered since, Ganneau, Renan and Ginsburg translate the passage, "In all seven thousand men, (but I did not kill) their wives and the free women and the slaves." ² Male counterpart of Astarte.

³ "Dragged them on the earth." *Ganneau and Renan.*

⁴ "Went up to." *G. and R.* "All its poor, and placed them in." *G.*

⁵ Add, "and constructed dungeons in it." *Ganneau and Renan.*

⁶ "And I dug watercourses to supply Korcha (by the labour of the captives) of Israel." *Ganneau and Renan.*

⁷ Add, "I built Beth Bamoth—the house of the high places—which was destroyed." *Ganneau and Renan.*

built Bezer—for fifty men of Dibon had attacked it—all Dibon was subject to me—and I set people in Bikran, and added it to my country.¹ And I built . . . and the temple of Diblathaim and the temple of Baalmeon, and brought thither (the image of) Chemosh."² Thus he had border feuds to settle where the Hebrews and Moabites were near each other; and temple building was natural for one who fancied himself so favoured by his god.

Mesha seems to have resolved to erect his high place to Chemosh at Korcha soon after the taking of Jahaz, having no doubt vowed that he would do so if victory were granted him. Such a sanctuary included various chambers for the altar, the holy vessels, etc., though it was not properly a temple.

This done, he appears to have headed the alliance of the united chiefs of Moab and of the Mehunim—roving Edomite mountaineers—with a band of Ammonites, to invade Judah.³ They had reached the oasis of Engedi, halfway up the west coast of the Dead Sea, having gone round its south end, before news of the inroad reached Jerusalem. The cliff of Ziz, at Engedi, once surmounted, they would be on the tableland which stretches to Jerusalem in a succession of stony hills and waterless ravines, under the names of the wildernesses of Jeruel, and, near Bethlehem, of Tekoa. In his extremity, Jehoshaphat, true to his office as only the vicerent for God, instantly proclaimed a public fast and humiliation, and himself, in the midst of the congregation assembled

¹ "And I added no fewer than a hundred towns to the territory of Moab." *Ganneau and Renan*.

² Add, "and Chemosh said, Descend and fight against Horonaim" (Edom). *G. and R.* ("And I assaulted and took it for) Chemosh (restored it) in my days." *G.* ³ 2 Chron. xx. 1, 2.

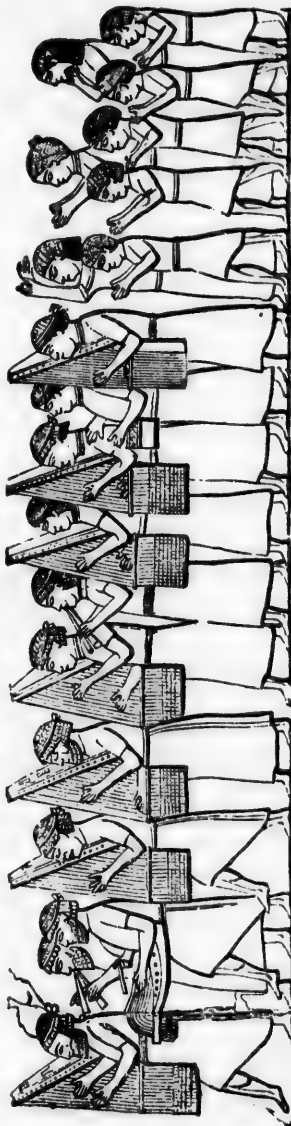
in the temple, implored help from their invisible and Almighty King. Such an example must have kindled and fed a lofty enthusiasm, which of itself would be an assurance of victory. A prophet, moreover, announced to the people that Jehovah was with them and would protect them. Meanwhile the enemy had reached Tekoa, and was thus only a few hours distant from the capital. There, however, providentially for Judah, a bitter dispute rose among them; the Moabites, with their related race, the Ammonites, falling on the Edomites, who resisted fiercely, but were ultimately cut down, as for some cause, devoted and accursed.¹ They may have been suspected of misleading their allies, for from this time the treachery of Edom became proverbial. Or perhaps the battle and massacre rose from an outburst of religious fanaticism, for Moab and Ammon had a form of heathenism essentially identical, while Edom seems to have clung to a comparatively purer faith. As the result, however, the Moabites, weakened by the conflict, hastily returned home, apparently in a panic, so that Jehoshaphat, when he approached with his troops, found only the deserted camp and a vast number of slain, with so prodigious a booty of silver and gold, rich robes, and costly vessels and jewels, that three days were spent in collecting it. Mesha, proud of his past successes, and trusting to the oracle of Chemosh, had hoped to take Jerusalem itself, but he had only drawn down a catastrophe which was the first step to his ruin. Jehoshaphat had marched out with a choir of Levites in their white robes chanting the ancient doxology of David—Praise Jehovah: His mercy endureth for ever²—to rouse the ardour of the host. His return was marked by equal jubilation. Such a deliverance moved all classes of the population. The temple

¹ 2 Chron. xx. 23.² 1 Chron. xvi. 34.

once more resounded with psalteries and harps and trumpets, mingling with hymns of triumphant praise of Him who had so visibly appeared to help the nation. Nor did the nobler spirits of the time fail to contribute their share to the universal rejoicing. The forty-seventh and fifty-eighth psalms are believed to commemorate the great victory, and may have been sung as a *Te Deum* at the great public thanksgiving on account of it.

This incident seems to have taken place during the short reign of Ahaziah, who, having no son, was succeeded by his brother, Joram; like himself, a man of ability and energetic activity; eager to follow up

¹ The instruments comprise harps played by hand: a dulcimer, played by percussion and by the hand; double flutes and a kind of drum. The music is accompanied by the hands and voices of women and children, led by an eunuch. Six of the men, in all, are eunuchs. The first three figures have one leg raised, as if dancing to their music.



A BAND OF SINGERS AND MUSICIANS, ASSYRIA.

the quarrel with Moab, while weakened by her recent disaster. Jehoshaphat, who had still four years to reign, was now a man of about 55, and had apparently associated his son Jehoram with him on the throne,¹ to lighten his own duties in his advancing years. The two courts of Judah and Israel, always friendly during Jehoshaphat's reign, were, meanwhile, more so than ever, for one result of the ill-omened visit to Samaria had been the marriage of Jehoram, his son, to Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel; the inheritress, as it proved, of all the worst qualities of her mother. Joram of Samaria, therefore, easily secured the help of Judah in the further prosecution of the war with Mesha. To make victory certain, a levy of all the available fighting men of Israel was made; and the vassal king of Edom was required by Jehoshaphat to join the expedition with his forces. Marching south to Jerusalem, Joram was joined by the foot and horse of Judah—for cavalry and chariots had been permanently in use since the days of Solomon—and the united armies advanced towards Moab, by the southern route, to meet the contingent from Edom, and to pass along the edge of its territory round the south end of the Dead Sea. Seven days of painful and slow stages had brought them apparently to the Wady el Ahse, the brook Zered of the wilderness life, marking the boundary between Edom and Moab.² Usually retaining some water, even in the heat of summer, it was now dry, and the army and its cattle were alike suffering greatly from thirst. Meanwhile, Mesha had gathered all the strength of Moab, from the youngest able to bear the sword girdle,³ and was close at hand. In this extremity the confederates were saved

¹ This is the general opinion.

² See 2 Kings iii. 21; xxii. 20.

³ 2 Kings iii. 21.

by the prophetic counsels of Elisha, who had accompanied Joram of Samaria, and was consulted by Jehoshaphat. By his directions a number of pits were dug in the bottom of the wady where they found themselves, to catch and retain the water which, he told them, would presently rush down from the highlands of Moab; though they should neither see wind nor rain, the storm breaking at too great a distance. Nor were they disappointed, for through the night the prediction was fulfilled.

Mesha and all the fighting power of Moab had, meanwhile, advanced to their boundary, and lay encamped, ready to repel the invasion, probably on the outer slopes of the hills which run along the south of Moab, overlooking the waste to the east.¹ Watching here during the night, they were astir with the first light. But when the sun rose suddenly, as it does in the East, with hardly any twilight, its level beams, red with the morning mists, revealed no enemy, but shone with a blood-red glare on the line of pools in the wady, dug on the preceding evening. No water having existed there before, the appearance was inexplicable, except on the supposition that the confederates had quarrelled, and had destroyed each other, as they themselves had done in their own invasion of Judah. The pools must be the blood of the slain; the survivors had fled, and the deserted camp invited pillage. The cry rose therefore, "Moab to the spoil!"² and the host in tumultuous confusion, each eager only to outstrip the other and gain most booty, rushed from the heights. A few moments and their mistake flashed on them but too vividly. Instead of empty tents, they found a vigorous army ready to assail them. Helpless as sheep, they could only turn and flee; their swift-footed enemies pressing remorselessly behind. All power of resistance in the

¹ *Moab, Dict. of Bible.*

² 2 Kings iii. 23.

field was swept away. On rolled the flood of invasion, carrying ruin and death far and near. According to the barbarous custom of antiquity, town after town, open or fortified, was levelled with the ground; the rich farms and vineyards buried under showers of stones, every soldier, as he passed, helping the desolation; all the wells and cisterns, the fountains of life in a hot country, filled up, and every fruit or timber tree cut down. "The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness."¹ Nothing escaped.

A last despairing stand was made at Kir-haraseth, now known as Kerak, a town almost impregnable by its position. It stands on an isolated triangular plateau of from 800 to 1,000 yards on each face; 3,720 feet above the sea, amidst heights still loftier, from which it is cut off on all points except one. Wadys from 1,000 to 1,350 feet deep, with precipitous sides, isolate it on the north and south, and a shallower ravine skirts its third side. The whole triangle has formerly been surrounded by a strong wall, and the rock is scarped a good way down. To an enemy, Kerak would be utterly inaccessible, except by winding paths on the west and north-west; and it could be entered only at two points, on the north-west and on the south, by dark tunnels, cut for forty paces through the rock. Huge ditches hewn out in the solid rock protect the weaker points; though these may be of later origin.²

¹ Joel ii. 3.

² Tristram's *Land of Moab*, pp. 70 ff. *Kir-Moab*, in *Riehm*, etc., etc. In the article *Kir-Moab*, in *Riehm*, the meaning of Kir-haraseth is given as "Potter's Town"—the head quarters of the pottery manufacture of Moab. Prof. Palmer, however, explains it as meaning the "city of the hill." *Pal. Fund Report*, 1881, p. 26.

This last stronghold the confederates now invested, with the intention of destroying it by famine, since they could not hope to take it by direct attack. Meanwhile, the amphitheatre of heights around enabled them to harass it by a constant fire of stones from the Benjamite slingers, and perhaps from the catapults which came into general use in sieges, under Uzziah.¹ Unable at last to endure this persistent annoyance, Mesha resolved on a desperate sally at the head of a forlorn hope of 700 swordsmen. The point chosen was that beleaguered by the Edomites, the specially hated foes of Moab, but the attempt to break through was defeated, and the king had to retire again into his citadel. It seemed as if Chemosh had deserted him, and was wroth, for some cause, with Moab. One hope of propitiating him and regaining his favour remained. Balak, centuries before, had had the same thought when sore pressed by Joshua, but had been held back from his purpose by Balaam. He would offer up, as a human sacrifice, his firstborn son, the heir apparent to the throne, and thus make the most terrible atonement which a country could offer to appease its offended god. Acting on this dreadful resolution, the king, and his son, were seen by the besiegers to mount the wall, attended by the priests of Chemosh. To the horror of all who lined the surrounding hills, with the city lying in full view below, an altar was now raised, and the lad handed over to the priests, by whom he was openly put to death, and then offered as a burnt sacrifice, to win, if possible, the heart of the god, from whom not even such an offering had been withheld.² The awful tragedy, indeed, accomplished its end, but by a means Mesha could not have foreseen, and with which Chemosh had nothing to do. The sight filled the besieging army with horror. Such sacrifices,

¹ 2 Chron. xxvi. 15.

² 2 Kings iii. 26.

in the opinion of the Hebrews, polluted a land and laid it under a curse of blood.¹ They would no longer stay in it, but would rather give up all they had won. To remain might bring on them the wrath which must speedily break forth for a deed so appalling. The camp therefore was broken up, and Mesha left unsubdued. But such a deliverance, effected apparently by the death of the prince, however clearly understood in Israel, might readily confirm Moab in its cruel idolatry.²

The prosperity of Judah, under Jehoshaphat, suffered no diminution as his reign drew to an end. Dignified, energetic, and true to a lofty public morality, as embodied in the ancient faith of Israel, he continued to attract the increasing respect of the neighbouring peoples. The Philistines willingly paid tribute, and Edom, as far as the eastern side of the Red Sea, had long been subdued. Ere his reign closed an attempt had even been made to reopen the sea-commerce with Ophir and other Indian ports, and a fleet of Indiamen had been built at Solomon's old port, Ezion-geber. But a storm had dashed them on the rocks before they set sail, and the enterprise was abandoned. It is noteworthy, however, that there is no mention of help being needed from Tyre in building them, as in the case of Solomon's ships, and that Jehoshaphat felt strong enough to decline overtures from Ahaziah to join him in the undertaking.³ His death, after a reign of twenty-five years, was a great calamity for his country.

The last years of Jehoshaphat were marked by the close of the great work of Elijah. Elisha had been

¹ Ps. cvi. 37-39.

² I have adopted the explanation of the words, "And there was great indignation against Israel," 2 Kings iii. 27, given by Bähr.

³ 2 Chron. xx. 36, 37.

appointed his successor, and the tired and worn soldier of God was to be allowed to enter on his reward. Only one glimpse of him is given us after the death of Ahaziah, till his translation. Jehoram of Judah had been associated with his father on the throne,¹ but had already shown the sad result of his marriage with the daughter of Jezebel. Turning from the example of his father to that of his wife, he "began to walk in the ways of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab, and to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah."² Elijah had confined his activities to the northern kingdom; Judah, under kings like Asa and Jehoshaphat, needing no such prophet of wrath. But now that the seeds of future heathenism were being sown by Athaliah, working through her husband, he felt impelled to send Jehoram a writing denouncing his evil course and predicting his death. It is the only instance we have of his committing his prophecies to writing.³

The narrative of his translation leads us to a district hitherto unconnected with his public life. He had shown himself, till now, so far as we know, only in the neighbourhood of the northern capital,—at Carmel, Jezreel, or Samaria. Now, however, he seems to have set out with his attendant Elisha, on a visit to the various

¹ 2 Kings viii. 16.

² 2 Chron. xxi. 12-15.

³ According to the Old Test. chronology Elijah was still alive when Jehoram reigned in Judah, and it is in itself likely that he denounced his sinful course. The mention of a letter or writing from the prophet to him is startling from the fact that, as said above, it is the only instance in which Elijah is mentioned as embodying his words in writing. It is recorded in the Book of Chronicles, which is of a comparatively late date; but there is no improbability that even a spoken prophecy may have been put in writing in the schools of the prophets, and sent to Jerusalem. See *Thenius*, in loc.

schools of the prophets in the south; to rouse them by his words and presence, to the old fidelity, from which, in too many cases, the order was fast sinking. The intimation of his approaching departure came to him at Gilgal; not the place of that name in the Ghor of the Jordan, but the present village of Jeljilia, north of Bethel.¹ As his mysterious change approached, the love of solitude seems to have returned to him, or, perhaps, he wished to escape the sorrow of parting with his friend. He therefore sought to be let go on alone to Bethel, whither he had been sent. But true love cannot forsake its object while neighbourhood is possible. "As Jehovah liveth," said Elisha, "and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." At Bethel the great secret had become known, probably by prophetic intimation, but the faithful attendant will not let it be mentioned; he knows it only too well, already. Thence they journey down to Jericho, and there the same question finds a similar answer. Elijah finally sought to leave Elisha behind, by telling him that God had sent him on to the Jordan; but nothing could keep back a heart so true. At last the two stood on the edge of the river, fifty of the sons of the prophets looking wistfully after them from a distance, to see the end. The sheepskin mantle now became the counterpart of the rod of Moses. Taking it off, and rolling it together, Elijah smote the waters, and "they divided hither and thither, so that the two went over on dry ground." The aged prophet was once more among his native hills, in the free air of the wilderness which he loved so well. He has only, further, to ask Elisha what he can do for him before he be taken away,

¹ *Dict. of Bible*, art. *Elijah*. They certainly could not "go down" to Bethel from the Gilgal of the Jordan (2 Kings ii. 3); but the other Gilgal is higher than Bethel. *Onder.*

"Let a firstborn son's double portion¹ of thy spirit be upon me," was the answer. "Thou hast asked a hard thing," replied Elijah, "but thou shalt have it, if thou seest me taken from thee." Conversing thus, the two went on together into the bosom of the hills, "And it came to pass that, as they talked, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Overwhelmed with sorrow at his sudden departure, the only thought of Elisha, for the moment, was his own grief. Uttering a bitter cry,² "My father, my father, thou art the chariot of Israel; thou hast been its horsemen," he gazed after him, rending his clothes in his sadness. Presently there fell from Elijah the mantle by which he had been so well known,³ and then he vanished from human sight, till that night when he appeared once more with Moses on the Hill of Transfiguration, speaking with Our Lord of the death presently to be accomplished at Jerusalem. But the gift of the mantle had answered the prayer of his servant: henceforth Elisha had the fulness of his spirit for which he had asked.

Thus ended the grand career of the greatest of the prophets since Moses. Yet his work remained, though he had entered on his glory, for from his life dates that reaction which kindled the zeal of his brethren in succeeding generations, and prepared the way for Him in whom all prophecy was fulfilled.

¹ Dent. xxi. 17. 2 Kings ii. 9, *Heb.*

² The word used is employed for the "great and bitter cry" at the destruction of the first-born in Egypt.

³ *Land and Book*, p. 118.



CHAPTER V.

THE PROPHET ELISHA.

ISRAEL.

JORAM, B.C. 895-883.

JUDAH.

JEHORAM, B.C. 893-883.

AHAZIAH „ 885-883.

ELISHA, c. B.C. 900-835.

THE appointment of Elisha as the “son” or special disciple of Elijah, appears to have been made seven or eight years before the translation of the elder prophet. A long training was needed for the destined successor of such a man, nor was it fitting that he should come into prominent notice till his master had passed away.

Elijah had been the prophet of wrath and judgment: Elisha came with a gentler mission. The times had in some measure changed. The worship of Baal was no longer in exclusive favour at court. Joram, Ahab's son and successor, at least tolerated that of Jehovah, though in association with the calf symbols of Bethel and Dan.¹ In after years, under the inspiration of Jezebel, the evil genius of his House, he was to restore Baal worship to its old pre-eminence, but, for the time, the work of Elijah had been accomplished, and his sternness might with advantage be laid aside. The thunders and lightnings of Horeb had done their part; men could now listen to the still small voice.

¹ 2 Kings iii. 2.

Identical in their zeal for God; Elijah and Elisha were, nevertheless, in many respects, very different men. The former had been a child of the wilderness, dwelling far from the abodes of men. The solitudes of Cherith or Carmel had been his home. He had shunned intercourse with his fellows, and fled from the artificial life of a town. The free air of the desert had been his vital element; the wild broom of its wadys his shade; the awful wilderness



MOUNT CARMEL AND THE PLAIN OF ACRE.

of Sinai his chosen retreat in the supreme hour of despondency. Driven to seek help in the time of famine and persecution, he had sought and found it at a distance from Israel, in the stricken home of a poor and unknown heathen widow.

Elisha was a man of the city; fond of its streets and crowds. Returning from the translation of his master, he had first revisited the schools of the prophets at

Jericho and Bethel,¹ to quicken their zeal, and formally take them under his care. A temporary retirement to the Carmel hills, the favourite haunt of Elijah, had followed. Like John the Baptist, or St. Paul, or Luther, he drew apart from men for a time, to gird his spirit to the great work before him. But this over, he returned permanently to the homes and everyday life of his people. Samaria became his residence for many years. He had a house of his own within the town walls, at the foot of the hill.² From this centre a wide apostolate was carried on, for well nigh fifty years, in every direction. Like Samuel, he seems to have made "circuits" over the whole country; rousing and instructing the people at large. So, "continually" did he pass by Shunem, the present village of Salem, twenty-five miles north of Samaria, in the great plain of Esdraelon, that a rich lady there, prepared a special chamber for his accommodation at successive visits. We may often follow him thither, over the endless hills of northern Ephraim, past Engannim, the Spring of the Gardens; over the dark soil of the plain; through Jezreel, with the palace of Jezebel, to the hills three miles north, at the foot of which the Philistines had encamped just before the battle of Gilboa.³ Nain and Endor lay on the other side of the height. It was almost his second home; for his hostess, living in country profusion, had given up to his use the roof-chamber or aliyeh, so much esteemed in the East,—cool, airy, retired; furnished in keeping with his simple habits; a bed, a table, a seat, and a lamp with its stand, all it contained.⁴ He is not unfrequently at Carmel and Dothan,

¹ 2 Kings ii. 18, 23.

² 2 Kings ii. 25; v. 3, 9; vi. 32 f.; xiii. 14.

³ 1 Sam. xxviii. 4.

⁴ 2 Kings iv. 8, 10. Furrer speaks of the simple and hearty

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with shorter or longer residence at each;¹ but we find him, also, at Gilgal, in the Ephraim hills, seventeen or eighteen miles south of Samaria.² He appears even in the far southern wilderness of Edom, voluntarily accompanying the joint army of Israel on its march against Moab,³ and then, again, in Damascus, the Syrian capital, fully 125 miles north-east of his own city. His occasional home at Carmel, moreover, was well known, and was the centre of religious gatherings on Sabbaths and new moons.⁴ Elijah had kept aloof from the great, but Elisha had frequent relations with two kings, Joram and Joash, and stood on such a footing with them and their highest subjects, that he could promise his Shunammite hostess to speak for her, either to royalty itself, or to the "Captain of the Host."⁵ A citizen among citizens, he moved about amidst the people leaning on his staff;⁶ his dress that of ordinary life; nor do we hear of his wearing even the sheepskin mantle of Elijah which he had inherited.⁷

In the quieter times on which his lot had fallen, he had no need for the sternness of his master. The doom of Ahab's house was, indeed, irreversible, and the shadow on the dial was slowly creeping towards the hour of its fulfilment; but when it came it was recognised as the curse uttered long before by the Tishbite, and known to the people as overhanging the dynasty.⁸ There is even a gentle tolerance in the younger prophet, hardly to be

kindness shown him in this very village. *Wanderungen*, p. 266. See also, *ante*, p. 65, and *Land and Book*, p. 160.

¹ 2 Kings iv. 25; vi. 13.

² 2 Kings iv. 38.

³ 2 Kings iii. 11.

⁴ 2 Kings iv. 23.

⁵ 2 Kings iv. 13; v. 8; vi. 9, 21, 32; vii. 1; viii. 4; ix. 1; xiii. 14.

⁶ 2 Kings iv. 29. Zech. viii. 4.

⁷ 2 Kings ii. 13.

⁸ 2 Kings ix. 26, 36; x. 10.

expected in such an age; as when he listens to Naaman's difficulty about his forced attendance on his master at the temple of Rimmon, the god of Damascus. In every way he shows touches of a softer and calmer nature than that of Elijah. He weeps at the thought of the troubles in store for Israel from Hazael, and the great characteristic of his miracles is a beneficent sympathy with even the poorest.

But though thus tender-spirited by nature, he could be stern when occasion demanded, and, like his master, he knew nothing of the fear of man. Though he bore with Joram while yielding and passive, he could not forget what his father had been, and when duty demanded, turns from him, and bids him consult, instead, the prophets of Ahab and Jezebel;¹ nor does he shrink from denouncing him to the elders of Samaria as the son of a murderer, ready to follow his father's steps.² In the punishment of Gehazi he shows himself prompt and unbending in his severity. One incident, indeed, seems at first sight an outbreak of unwarrantable anger and harshness; the destruction of the so-called "children," at Bethel. But examination tempers the censure.

The choice of Bethel by Jeroboam as the head-quarters of the calf worship, the seat of a grand temple built in opposition to that at Jerusalem, and of a royal palace, had at once flattered and enriched the inhabitants, and kindled their fierce and interested hatred of those, who, like the prophets, denounced the royal action. The citizens had become, it would appear, almost the counterparts of the bigoted Mahomedans of Safed or Nablûs, who at this day insult and often attack any Christian stranger who enters their limits; even the children cursing the "infidel" as he passes. As Elisha was making his way

¹ 2 Kings iii. 13.

² 2 Kings vi. 32.

up the hill to the town such an outburst of fanatical hatred greeted him. A band of young men, not children,¹ hurled opprobrious epithets at him as the representative of the ancient faith which they had abandoned. He was to them only a "bald-head," that is, in the old Hebrew vocabulary, a leper—for baldness was a great sign of leprosy; a taunt embodying concentrated hatred and aversion. But it was his religion that was his leprosy in their eyes, for he was still in his early prime, with nearly fifty years of life before him, and physical baldness is not to be thought of.² That such a manifestation of resolute and blasphemous irreligion should be followed by a swift and exemplary penalty, is only in keeping with the history of a people, among whom sins against religion had often before been marked by similar Divine visitations.

Elijah has left a record of great public acts to which the miraculous was, as it were, subordinate; but while few of the acts of Elisha are mentioned, he is noted for the number of his miracles. Was it because the power and goodness of Jehovah needed to be specially impressed on a people prone to apostatize, and tempted to do so by the rival wonders of the priests of Baal? The times of Moses and Joshua, in which the supreme claims of the true religion had to be urged on the community, in

¹ The word is *Naar*, and is used of Solomon at his accession, when he was at least twenty years old (1 Kings iii. 7); of Jeremiah, when called to be a prophet (Jer. i. 6, 7); and the companions of King Rehoboam who, himself, was forty years old when he began to reign, are described by the word *Yeled*, which is often translated in our version by "child," e.g. 1 Kings iii. 25; xvii. 21; (see 1 Kings xii. 8, 10, 14; 2 Chron. x. 14).

² All consecrated persons, whether priests or Nazarites, were forbidden to shave the hair off any part of their head. Hence baldness was held a disgrace. Lev. xxi. 5. Num. vi. 5. Isa. iii. 17; xv. 2. On this incident see Lühr. *Die B. der Könige*, in loc.

preparation for their entrance on a heathen district, and permanent residence in the presence of idolatry, had been marked by a similar activity of supernatural interposition. So, also, had the close of the era of the Judges, when the smouldering loyalty to Jehovah needed to be rekindled to a flame. Special power to work miracles may, therefore, have been granted to Elijah and Elisha, to strengthen faith in Jehovah at a time when it was in abeyance, and to rouse, if possible, the languid zeal of the nation.

The wonders recorded of Elisha, as has been noticed, are a testimony to his gentle and loving nature. He heals the waters of Jericho by casting salt into them from a new cruse, doubtless with due invocation of God, and from that time the district had no more reason to lament a fatality which had been associated by them with the use of these springs.¹ A prophet's widow has her oil increased, and thus obtains the means of preventing her two sons from being sold as slaves, for her husband's debts—an outrage contrary to the law, but permitted in those unsettled and half heathen times.² For his rich but childless hostess at Shunem he obtains the gift of a son, the honour most highly prized by Hebrew women, and

¹ 2 Kings ii. 19. They were believed to cause children to be born dead. The spring was apparently the "Ain es Sultan." *Thenius. Hitzig.*

² A man who had mortgaged his property and could not support his family might sell *himself* to another Hebrew, to obtain maintenance, and, it might be, a surplus to redeem his inheritance (Lev. xxv. 25, 29). Michaelis thinks that under this law a creditor could seize his debtor and sell him as a slave; but this inference is unwarranted, for the Hebrew speaks of him as *selling himself*, not as *being sold*. *Ges., Thes.*, p. 787. The case in Matt. xviii. 25, is probably borrowed from Roman usages. In Isa. l. 1, the reference is to one who is already a slave.

restores him to life, when, years after, he had suddenly died.¹ He replaces even so slight a loss as that of an axe-head which has fallen through the thickets of the Jordan into the river, as the sons of the prophets are hewing wood to build new huts in their settlement. The deadly herbs² brought by one of the community, in the lap of his mantle, and shred into their humble pottage, are made harmless. At Baal-shalisha, in the hills of Ephraim, he gives to the poor the presents brought him, and miraculously increases them, that none may want.³ If he smites

¹ "I know by experience that this valley glows like a furnace in harvest-time." Thomson's *Land and Book*, p. 457. The boy died of a sunstroke. Elisha was ten or twelve miles off at Carmel. The mother's falling down and clasping the feet of the prophet were actions which are still seen every day in the East. The command to Gehazi not to salute any one by the way was equivalent to saying—lose no time in idle compliments; for the formal salutations, then as now, in use, were tedious and protracted * (2 Kings viii. 3). It is said that the Shunammite widow lost her estate by having gone to the sea plain during a temporary famine. It is still common even for petty sheiks to confiscate the property of any one who leaves the country for a time, and it can hardly be restored except by powerful mediation. That Gehazi should have talked with the king is in perfect keeping with the habits of Eastern princes, and that his representation should have got the widow's land back to her is no less true to the ways of Eastern rulers. The use of the prophet's staff by Gehazi finds a curious illustration in an almost similar use of the staff of a reputedly inspired man in the Polynesian Islands. It was simply held before the sick person, who was expected to recover by its presence. Turner's *Polynesia*.

² Apparently the colocynth, which grows most abundantly on the barren sands near Gilgal, and all round the Dead Sea, covering much ground with its tendrils, and bearing prodigious quantities of fruit. Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 452.

³ 2 Kings iv. 38-44.

* Furrer, p. 85.

the Syrians with blindness, he speedily removes it; and while Elijah predicts famine, he foretells plenty.¹

But though the miracles of Elisha often affected only individuals, and his days passed in the quiet of ordinary life, his influence was wide and powerful. Elijah had lamented at the end of his career the disappointment of his hopes; Elisha's life, if it knew no moments of supreme exaltation, closed amidst universal veneration. For many years he was the foremost subject in the land, for he died under the third king of a dynasty he had founded. Jehoshaphat consults him in war. Joram seeks his advice respecting the treatment of prisoners. Benhadad of Damascus sends to him in sickness. Hazael, the future king, is awed before him, and Naaman listens to him with the lowliest respect.² His end is in harmony with such a dignity in his lifetime. In his extreme old age, the king visited him on his sick bed, to receive his dying counsels, and he was honoured with a splendid funeral.³ Nor did the veneration in which he was held cease with his life. A splendid monument raised over his grave near Samaria, was shown with reverence in after ages, and funeral dances were celebrated periodically in his honour round the sacred spot where he lay.⁴

The condition of the kingdom of Judah after the death of the good Jehoshaphat was sad in the extreme. His son Jehoram had been associated with him on the throne for some years, but had reached the age of thirty-two before he entered on his independent reign. His brother-in-law, Joram, the son of Ahab, had already been two years in power at Samaria, after the death of

¹ 2 Kings vi. 18-20; vii. 1.

² 2 Kings iii. 11-19; vi. 21; viii. 7-8, 11-13; xiii. 14-19.

³ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. viii. 6.

⁴ Jerome, *Comm. on Obad.* i. 1. *Epitaph. Paulæ*, § 13.

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Ahaziah, his brother. The invasion of Moab which reduced Mesha to such extremity, had taken place at the opening of Joram's reign, shortly before the close of that of Jehoshaphat. But, as often happens, the son of one so good and wise proved a painful contrast to his father. Married to Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, he had from the first fallen under her influence, which she used to promote the worship of the Phenician gods, so dear to her race. Men recalled the parallel case of Rehoboam, the slave of his heathen mother, Naamah the Ammonitess, and of his wife Maachah, the grand-daughter of Absalom, who was a zealot for idolatry.¹ As in the last century, so also now, female influence was introducing heathenism into Judah, with all the calamities it brought in its train. Athaliah was the close counterpart of her mother, and was destined to play even a more terrible part. The fierce determined energy; the fanatical zeal for Phenician superstition; the utter unscrupulousness alike of heart and conscience which characterized Jezebel, were as marked in her daughter. We see her hand already in the opening act of her husband's reign. Imitating the example set long before by Abimelech, in slaying all the sons of Gideon, he signalized his accession by the murder of his brothers, six in number. Jehoshaphat, like Rehoboam, had withdrawn them from the luxurious idleness of Eastern princes by appointing them over different fortified towns, with separate private establishments. But their birth no less than their local dignity was a crime in the jealous eyes of Jehoram. Numbers of officials and others supposed to favour them, shared their fate, that the throne might fear no disturbance. The mere tool of his wife, he let her have her way in promoting idolatry.

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. x. 1. 1 Kings xv. 13. 2 Chron. xv. 16. She was descended from Tamar.

High places to Baal and Ashtoreth rose in the cities of of Judah.¹ The worship of Jehovah in the temple was still permitted, but heathenism, thus favoured by the court, threatened to cover the land. Elijah, who was alive at Jehoram's accession, had sent him a stern denunciation of his apostasy and his crimes; anticipating in this single instance the practice of later prophets, by committing his message to writing.² But it had no effect on Jehoram's course.³ Weak and incapable alike as a man and a king, his reign was a succession of public humiliations which reduced the country to such weakness that it seemed as if the "lamp" promised to burn in the House of David must have gone out, but for the faithfulness of Jehovah to His covenant.⁴

Under the strong and firm hand of Jehoshaphat, Edom had been incorporated once more in the dominions of Judah, under a vassal king,⁵ but the weakness of Jehoram encouraged its revolt. Longing to regain the independence lost under David, it rebelled, perhaps in alliance with Moab, and set up a scion of its ancient princely House as king.⁶ The Jews in the country were mur-

¹ 2 Chron. xxi. 1-11. For "mountains" read "cities."

² See p. 111.

³ 2 Chron. xxi. 12-15. In 2 Kings viii. 19, it is said that "Jehovah would not destroy Judah for David His servant's sake, as He promised him to give him alway a light," &c. This expression alludes to the universal custom in the East of keeping a light burning all night in each house. Even the poorest woman rises through the night to trim her lamp, and it would be the worst of omens if it went out. Neil's *Palestine Explored*, p. 91. Furrer's *Palästina*, p. 109. This custom illustrates many texts; among others: 1 Kings xi. 36; xv. 4. Job xviii. 5, 6; xxi. 17. Prov. xiii. 9. Jer. xxv. 10. Rev. xviii. 23.

⁴ 2 Kings viii. 19. 2 Chron. xxi. 7.

⁵ 1 Kings xxii. 48. 2 Kings iii. 9.

⁶ 2 Kings viii. 20. 2 Chron. xxi. 8.

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dered,¹ and a fierce resolution to die for freedom, if necessary, filled all breasts. Jehoram invaded the wild mountains of Seir² with infantry and chariots, but only to find himself hopelessly surrounded, and to be forced to save himself and part of his army by cutting his way by night through the enemy.³ Edom was lost, and remained for fifty years independent. Encouraged by its success, the Philistines also rose. Libnah, an old Canaanite royal city, and afterwards a Levitical town⁴ under Joshua, revolted and joined them. Gath, the capture of which had been one of the glories of David's reign, regained its independence,⁵ and even assumed the aggressive. The Philistines, in alliance with Arab tribes⁶ from the south, invaded Jerusalem. Desolating the country and carrying off multitudes of the people as slaves,⁷ they finally stormed the city, sacking the palace and capturing all the royal family and the king's harem; Jehoahaz, afterwards known as Ahaziah, alone, of the royal family, escaping.⁸

¹ Joel iii. 19. Hitzig p. 88, *Joel*

² 2 Kings viii. 21 reads "Zair," but the Vulgate renders it Seir. Graetz and Ewald think of Zoar, the palm city, at the south corner of the Dead Sea.

³ 2 Kings viii. 21. 2 Chron. xxi. 9.

⁴ Josh. xii. 15; xv. 42. Supposed to be Tell es Safieh, near Eleutheropolis, but this is doubtful. Libnah was afterwards reconquered, as it appears in the list of fortified towns of Judah besieged by Sennacherib. 2 Kings xix. 8.

⁵ Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 564.

⁶ The Arabs were in the pay of the Philistines in the time of Alexander the Great. *Hitzig*, vol. i. p. 201.

⁷ Amos i. 6-8.

⁸ Zöckler, *Die B. der Chroniker*, ii. c. 21, v. 17, thinks that only the royal camp was taken, since there is no mention of the temple being sacked. The *Sept.* has Ahaziah instead of Jehoahaz. See 2 Kings ix. 22, 29.

A reign so disastrous and so obnoxious to the national instincts in its religious policy, alienated the people. A courtly faction, which supported Queen Athaliah in her heathen tastes, had already sprung up, but it had as yet no hold on the population at large. Jehoram, moreover, seemed in his own person to be judged and punished for his course, by a long and agonizing internal disease which had struck him down. When, therefore, he died, no pretence of regret was heard; the customary funeral honours of a king were denied him, and his body, refused admission to the royal tombs, was buried in a separate spot inside the walls.¹ The apostate could not be allowed to sleep in the sepulchre of David.

The incident of Naaman's visit to Elisha falls apparently in these years. The successive defeats of Benhadad by Ahab² and by the Assyrian king³ had so weakened Syria, that the chronic war with Israel had dwindled into fierce marauding expeditions over the border, to plunder, and carry off slaves. One of the most famous leaders of these forays, was Naaman,—“the good fellow,”—a dashing officer, but, unfortunately for himself, a leper. In Israel this would have disqualified him for public duty, but it was different at Damascus. A Hebrew slave girl's prattle to his wife, her mistress, about the prophet at Samaria, who could cure her master, led to his hearing of Elisha. Eagerly catching at any chance, he laid the matter before Benhadad, and not only received permission to go to Samaria, but bore with him a royal autograph letter from his sovereign to Joram, asking his kind offices in the strange mission. To come before any one without a gift when a favour was to be asked, would have been inexcusable rudeness; but when the favour was health, and the personage approached a man

¹ 2 Chron. xxi. 19, 20.

² See p. 84 f.

³ See p. 89 f.

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who had power with the god of his country, no bounty could be too great to propitiate his good-will. The priests of Damascus would have taken any gift offered them, as a matter of course, and Elisha, it was assumed, was like them in this respect. Naaman carried with him, therefore, ten talents of silver, worth about £3,750, and 6,000 pieces of gold, worth twice as much,¹ and ten costly robes; part to be given beforehand, the rest when he was cured. The terror of Joram at Benhadad's letter, asking him to cure Naaman's leprosy; "as if he were God," or could raise a man from this living death, is vividly painted in the sacred narrative. The Syrian finally draws up with his chariot and escort at the humble door of the prophet; unwilling, perhaps, to intrude on the holy man, or thinking it may be, that Elisha might well come out to one in his high position. The message sent to him by Gehazi, to wash seven times in Jordan, seems a designed affront, for he cannot realize that the prophet, as the representative of Jehovah, is greater than kings, or that he shrinks from appearing in person before one who had done so much harm to his people. That the muddy waters of Jordan should heal him appears like mockery. Did not the clear mountain streams from Lebanon—Abana and Pharpar—the Barady and its principal confluent, flow through Damascus?² If bathing were the cure, why not they rather than the turbid river of Israel.³ But quiet counsel from his attendants leads to wiser thoughts; Naaman frankly complies and is healed. Yet Elisha will take no reward. The gifts of Jehovah are free. His prophet is not a greedy heathen priest.

¹ *Keil.*

² *Kneucker. Bib. Lex.,* vol. i. pp. 114, 558. The Greeks called the "Abana" "the golden stream," from its clear beauty.

³ Jordan is turbid with the clay of its course.

It is in keeping with the ideas of the age, that the grateful Syrian should ask leave to carry back to Damascus two mules' burden of earth to build an altar to Jehovah on the soil of His own land; on which alone, men would then think, He could be rightly honoured. The altar, moreover, would be a memorial to the God of Israel in a foreign land,¹ like the synagogue raised, ages later, by the Jews of Nahardea, in Persia, all the stones and earth of which had been brought from Jerusalem.² He makes only one request more, and this the prophet, with a fine anticipation of Christian charity, tacitly grants. When his master, leaning on his arm, required him to go into the temple of Rimmon, and he had to prostrate himself before the god; he trusted it would not be reckoned disloyalty to Jehovah, whom alone he would henceforth really worship. Gehazi's punishment³ for treacherous meanness which compromised not only Elisha, but the true religion itself, is a fitting pendant to the story.

While thus tender and pitiful even to a public enemy in his affliction, Elisha was none the less loyal and vigilant on behalf of his own people. The frequent incursions of the Syrians found no more watchful eye on them than his, and were foiled by him again and again.⁴ A great effort was at last, however, made by Benhadad to retrieve his uniform failures in the past. Collecting the whole

¹ Bähr, *Die B. der Könige*, p. 288.

² *Benjamin of Tudela*.

³ Gehazi might have been expected to have followed Elisha as the leading prophet of his age. His master had thus followed Elijah, to whom his relations had been similar. But Gehazi in his heart was unworthy, and instead of inheriting the spiritual honours that seemed to await him, became the founder of a race of lepers bearing on their foreheads the mark of their accursed ancestry. Stanley. 2 Kings v. 27.

⁴ 2 Kings vi. 8-23.

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force of his kingdom, he once more besieged Samaria, from the walls of which he had retreated ignominiously about ten years before.¹ Closely investing it, his troops, looking down from the neighbouring hills, could see the misery of the citizens, which ere long became terrible. The head of an ass, though that of an unclean beast, was gladly bought for eighty shekels, or about eight pounds sterling,² while a pint of dove's dung,³ brought five shekels, or about fifteen shillings.⁴ Such misery was unendurable. Face to face with death, the wretched population grew desperate; even mothers killing their children for food. Elisha, who was in the town, urged resistance to the uttermost, promising deliverance from God. Joram, however, shocked by overhearing a dispute in which two women wrangled about killing and eating their infants; instead of blaming his own character and weak rule, turned against the prophet for having opposed surrender. He was making his wonted round along the 'broad top of the city wall at the time, and rent his outer robe in grief at the awful revelation, vowing vengeance on Elisha. King as he was, he had fasted, and worn sackcloth next his skin⁵ at the prophet's words, and yet they had come to nothing. The author of so much misery should die. An attendant was therefore sent to Elisha's house with

¹ 1 Kings xx.² *Thenius*.

³ The cab was the fourth part of a seah—two quarts. So say the Rabbis. *Bähr*. Dove's dung may either be taken literally or it may have been the name of some small pea or grain. The soap plant is called "sparrow's dung" by the Arabs. Plutarch mentions a siege in which an ass's head was hardly to be bought for sixty drachmas, though in ordinary times a live ass cost only twenty-five or thirty, and Pliny says that in Hannibal's siege of Casulinum, a mouse sold for 200 denarii—about £6. Plut., *Artaxers.*, 24. Plin., *Hist. Nat.*, viii. 57.

⁴ *Thenius*.⁵ 2 Kings vi. 30.

orders to behead the prophet. But the seer was on his guard. Hearing the feet of some one approaching, he ordered the elders of the city, who were with him, to press against the door, and keep it from being opened.¹ "Joram, the son of a murderer," cried he, "has sent to kill me." Presently the king himself arrived, and broke out, in his excitement, with the words,—“What good is there in waiting any longer for deliverance from Jehovah. He has let things come to such a pass that mother is killing and eating their own children!”² But the answer was none the less calm and trustful. “To-morrow, about this time,” he was told, “plenty will reign in Samaria.” “If Jehovah, your God, make windows in heaven and rain down food for us from them, it may be so, but not otherwise,” muttered one of the officers in attendance. “You shall see the plenty,” replied Elisha, “but not taste it.”

As in other Eastern cities, some lepers had their miserable huts outside the city gates, not being permitted to enter the town. Famine had made them desperate. To steal into the city would only be to die; to go to the Syrian army could bring no worse. They would go. In the meantime, a sudden panic had seized the host of Benhadad. They had heard noises in the air which seemed like the sound of horses and chariots and the other forces of a great host. “The king of Israel has hired the northern Hittite princes and the southern Egyptian kings against us, and they are surrounding against us,” ran from lip to lip of the army, and struck its battalions with a deadly unreasoning terror. Precipitately abandoning their quarters, with the tents, horses, asses, and warlike stores, they thought only of their lives, and fled in wild confusion, leaving the encampment forsaken when the

¹ 2 Kings vi. 32.*Ibid.*, ver. 32.

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lepers reached it. The great news having been carried back to Samaria, the remnant of armed men in the city sallied forth only to find the whole track of the fugitives strewn with evidences of their headlong flight, and before night the famished citizens, thus saved, had feasted on the plenty left behind, and enriched themselves with the spoils of the tents. The crowding at the city gate had been terrible, but it was noticed that no life was lost except that of the officer who had ridiculed the hope of deliverance. Thrown down in the crush, he had been trampled to death.

Famine, as usual, followed in the footsteps of war. The rich Shunammite had to leave her estates in Esdraelon, and go to the Philistine plains, and Elisha, partly it may be from the famine, and perhaps, also, from his strained and painful relations with Joram, since the siege and the threat of the king to murder him, had to betake himself to Damascus, where a change of dynasty was imminent. Benhadad II., unfortunate alike in his wars with Israel and Assyria, and hence, no doubt unpopular, had fallen sick. Hearing of Elisha's arrival, and remembering Naaman's cure, he sent to him eagerly as to an oracle, to learn his hopes of recovery. The spot is still pointed out, four miles from the city, where tradition affirms that Hazael, an officer of high position at the Syrian court, the envoy from the king, met the prophet; a long train of forty camels, laden with "everything good" in the city, following the cavalcade, to reward the seer.¹ "Benhadad *might* recover, but *would* die," was the ominous answer; the eyes of the prophet resting long and sadly on Hazael, as he spoke, and his tears flowing freely at

¹ The gifts to prophets and temples were sometimes immense. See *Herod*, i. 54-57. They were likewise paraded on as great a train of horses or animals as might be, to heighten their effect.

the thought of the miseries the Syrian would cause Israel.¹ Quailing before the gaze thus fixed on him, Hazael turned aside confused and ashamed, resenting the imputation of treason. Next day, however, Hazael was king.² He, or some one commissioned by him, had overpowered Benhadad in his bath, and had suffocated him with the wet cloths he had been using.³

Benhadad, though brave, had been unsuccessful. Assyria had repeatedly defeated him; Israel had put his armies to flight once and again, and the various Syrian kings who had been his vassals had revolted.⁴ It was incumbent, therefore, on Hazael to restore the honour of the State, and to this he devoted a fierce and able energy. Notwithstanding treaty engagements, the Israelitish town of Ramoth Gilead, one of the great fastnesses on the east of Jordan, and the key to the district of Argob and Jair, had been held by the Syrians since its seizure by Benhadad I. in the reign of Omri.⁵ Ahab had perished in an attempt to recover it, and Ahaziah had died while preparing for a second expedition with the same object. Joram, encouraged by the favourable issue of the siege of Samaria, now determined on another effort to win it back. Allying himself with his nephew—Athaliah's son—Ahaziah, king of Judah—as his father had done with Jehoshaphat, the two, with their joint forces, marched across the Jordan and wrested the town from Syria⁶; holding it henceforth in spite of all the efforts of Hazael to reconquer

¹ The ferocity of ancient warfare is well shown in verse 12 of 2 Kings viii.

² The Assyrian inscriptions mention Hazael as the successor of Benhadad. Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 164.

³ Ewald speaks of the quilt on which he had been lying in the hot bath as the "coverlet" used. *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 562.

⁴ Smith's *Assyria*, p. 54.

⁵ *Jos., Ant.*, VIII. xv. 3.

⁶ *Jos., Ant.*, IX. vi. 1.

it. Joram, however, narrowly escaped the fate of Ahab, for he was so severely wounded by a Syrian arrow during the fight, that he had to leave the fortress in the hands of a general-in-chief, and return to his palace at Jezreel, to be healed.¹

Meanwhile it had fared ill with the ancient faith, both in Israel and Judah. Passive under the strong and untamed will of the queen-mother Jezebel, Joram, though not himself an idolater, had, like his father Ahab, allowed her to favour and promote the heathenism she loved. The huge Baal temple, built by Ahab² in Samaria, with its staff of 450 white-robed priests,³ was maintained with great splendour. That of Asherah, at Jezreel, with 400 priests, still polluted the land by its rites and worship. The vast courts of the Samaritan Baal-temple were thronged with worshippers at the high festivals of the god. Phenician idolatry was becoming an Israelitish institution. Sacred pillars⁴ and images glittered on all sides; that of Baal himself shining out from the darkness of the inner holy of holies—half fortress, half sanctuary—in which it rose, awfully, aloft. Fifty years had passed since the introduction of heathenism, yet the open worshippers of Baal were still so few, outside the court party in Samaria, that all found in the whole kingdom, could assemble at one time in the temple area.⁵ Indifference, however, had spread far and wide; immorality was sapping the national character, and the future ruin of Jehovah worship seemed assured, if things continued as they were.

¹ 2 Kings viii. 28; ix. 15. 2 Chron. xxii. 6.

² 1 Kings xvi. 32.

³ Baal, in *Riehm*.

⁴ These pillars were shaped like obelisks. *Movers*. J. G. Müller thinks they were dials and the like. *Baal*, in *Heraog*.

⁵ 2 Kings x. 21.

In Judah the baleful influence of Jezebel was no less threatening; Athaliah, her daughter, repeating there the part her mother was playing in Israel. Wholly under her spell, her husband, Jehoram, had allowed Baal worship to be set up, in its most repulsive features, in Jerusalem itself. After his death, their one surviving son, Jehoahaz or Azariah, was only king in name. In reality, Athaliah reigned. A temple to Baal had already been built by her family, in part from the stones of the temple of Jehovah, which had been defaced to construct it; and the sacred vessels had been taken for the service of the idol.¹ It had its altars, images, and staff of clergy, under a chief—Mattan—the only priest of Baal whose name has survived.² A heathen camarilla was supreme alike in Jerusalem and Samaria. The moral and political cancer of heathenism had invaded the last sanctuary of Jehovah worship. Israel had long been tainted; Judah was now in peril. The national faith was in danger of being driven from the land.

In such a crisis the prophets, in all emergencies the faithful Swiss Guard of the true religion, must, at last, have felt it imperative to break, finally and for ever, with the house of Ahab. The mass of the people were still more or less loyal to the past, and they were profoundly discontented. The long protest of Elijah and Elisha had spread silently through the land, and had undermined the authority of the reigning house. That a woman like Jezebel, a foreigner and a heathen—should have held the sway in Israel for two reigns—lording it over the Church as well as the State, at the caprice of her imperious will, had become intolerable. Only a spark was needed to kindle a universal revolt. To the prophets especially, and among them to Elisha, their head, the

¹ 2 Chron. xxiv. 4, 7.

² 2 Kings xi. 15.

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extremest measures that promised to save the country were not only justifiable, but a duty. All was at stake. Religion and even the nation itself must perish if the family of Ahab continued to reign. But the revolution thus believed to be unavoidable, required a first impulse.

On whom did it devolve to give this but on the head of the prophets, as the divinely commissioned representative of nationality, of the true religion, and of popular freedom and rights? Nor did it seem to Elisha that he could rely simply on moral influence. The spirit of Elijah had risen within him. The only adequate action to be taken was political. The sternness and fire-like energy of his master pointed out what appeared to be the true course. Truth and right, in this view of things, could be served only by his throwing himself directly into the stream of events, and bringing about a violent solution of the crisis. The revolution which presently developed itself, under his direct impulse, was at once the execution of a long impending judgment on the house of Ahab for its crimes, and a fierce stroke for the preservation of the religious and national interests of the land.





CHAPTER VI.

THE REACTION AGAINST HEATHENISM.

ISRAEL.

Jehu, B.C. 883-855.

JUDAH.

Athaliah, B.C. 883-877.

Jehoash, „ 877-857.

THE army at Ramoth Gilead had been left by Joram under the command of his chief officer, Jehu,¹ a veteran who in his youth had been in the body guard of Ahab, and high in his favour. Since then, his long service and apparent fidelity had secured him the confidence of Ahaziah and Joram. Under a smooth exterior however, had his master known it, there lay hidden the most dangerous qualities. Apparently no more than a fiery and resolute soldier, he was a true Hebrew in his power of dissimulation and subtle craft. He had ridden in the chariot behind Ahab, with his comrade Bidkar or Bar Dakar, on that fatal journey from Samaria to Jezreel, when Elijah suddenly encountered the king and denounced the murder of Naboth and his sons, and he had heard the portentous curse on Ahab and his house. The scene and the sentence of wrath could never be forgotten, and perhaps raised ambitious thoughts, cherished ever after in his heart. Elijah's bearing, moreover, may have shown that he expected him to be the instrument of vengeance. In any case, he had long brooded

¹ 2 Kings ix. 25.

over the prophet's words. Yet he had borne himself so that his rise had been steady, till he was next in rank to the royal family, as commander of the host. Elijah had been directed at Horeb to anoint him future king of Israel, but for some unknown reason the commission had remained for many years unfulfilled. He was now, apparently, about forty, but retained all the energy of youth; a man of high consideration among his fellows; accustomed to command and to be obeyed. His reckless impetuosity showed itself in his furious riding and driving, by which he was known through the army. But while capable of the swiftest and sternest action, he could employ for his ends, when it suited, the darkest treachery; the union of these opposite qualities constituting indeed his special characteristic. Long ready for treason he only waited an opportunity and a hint from the prophets, whose support and authority with the people he needed, and the race of Ahab was lost.

No more suitable instrument of a great political revolution could have been found; none fitter to destroy Baal worship and avenge the martyrs of Ahab and Jezebel's reign. Without a trace of personal religion, he could assume a holy zeal as the champion of Jehovah, and no tenderness or fear would hinder it going all needed lengths.

Some weeks after Joram's retirement, wounded, to Jezreel, a young prophet,¹ sent by Elisha, suddenly appeared in Ramoth Gilead, his mantle girt up round him, as with runners or men in great haste. Making his way to the house where Jehu was sitting in council with his chief officers, he called him apart, and took him from chamber to chamber into the innermost room of the

¹ Said by tradition to have been the future prophet Jonah, and the son of the widow of Sarepta. See p. 65.

house, where he was absolutely alone. Producing a small horn of sacred oil¹ he poured it upon Jehu's head, telling him that God had anointed him king, with the express commission to cut off "the whole house of Ahab" as that of Jeroboam and that of Baasha had perished.² This done, the visitor left the house and disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

Such an interruption, by such a personage, had raised the wonder of the assembled officers. What had the mad fellow said? For to rough soldiers a prophet was a subject of mingled ridicule and superstitious fear. Evading an answer for the moment, Jehu was bluntly told that he lied; so rude were the manners of the camp.³ The next instant he disclosed the communication he had received. It was enough. The hollowness of Joram's position showed itself at once. All who heard were ready to revolt, and the words of Jehu kindled the smouldering disaffection to a flame. The discontent of the nation with the existing government had spread even to the highest ranks of the army, and only a signal was needed to inaugurate a revolution. In a moment loud shouts of loyalty to Jehu as king rose from all present. Throwing their great square military cloaks⁴ on the ground as an extemporized carpet of state, they conducted him to the top of the stairs leading to the flat roof, and seating him there as on a throne—with the sky for background—blew wild flourishes on their trumpets, and proclaimed him king; the whole army presently joining the cry.

It was necessary, however, that no time should be lost,

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. vi. 1.

² 2 Kings ix. 1-10

³ One is reminded of the language of the heroes of the *Iliad* to each other.

⁴ The "beged," from "bagad," to cover,

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and that news of the movement should, meanwhile, be kept from reaching Joram. Strict orders were therefore given that no one should leave the city. Mounting his chariot with his old comrade Bidkar, and taking with him a detachment of troops, Jehu set off, armed with his bow and quiver, at the wildest speed, towards Jezreel, turning back every one he overtook on the road. It was a long ride of more than fifty miles, but he pressed on at furious haste. Ramoth was built on the crest of a hill 2,700 feet above the sea.¹ Thence Jehu's party rushed northwards, past Jebel Oscha, 3,400 feet high, towards the deep gorge of the Jabbok; thence, still to the north, past Jabesh Gilead, looking down from its hills; then, on to the hill where stood Pella, in later times. Rounding this, the track bent due east to the sunken bed of the Jordan, which was forded opposite Bethshean. Thence the steep wady El Djalud, with Gideon's Spring of Trembling, flowing from ledge to ledge down its centre, led them straight up to Esdraelon and Jezreel. Sentinels on the watch-tower crowning the town hill, close to the palace, noticed, five or six miles off, a cloud of dust² in the east; the sign that chariots approached. Forthwith a rider was sent out to learn their message. He was instantly ordered to fall behind and follow. A second was similarly detained. At last Joram, learning that the furious driving marked the cavalcade as attending Jehu, and suspecting no treachery, ordered his own chariot and rode out to meet him, accompanied by King Ahaziah of Judah, then at Jezreel to sympathize with his wounded uncle. They expected stirring news from Ramoth, and were eager to hear them. Had Hazael made peace?

¹ Kiepert's *Map*.

² 2 Kings ix. 17, *Sept.* Jehu could be seen five or six miles off. *Land and Book*, p. 450.

shouted Joram as he came near. "Peace!" cried Jehu, with an ominous turn of the word, "what peace can there be as long as Jezebel acts so wickedly as she does." Joram, thus treated as a mere passive tool, and keenly aware of the queen mother's unpopularity, felt in a moment that all was lost. The hatred of the people, so long pent up, had at last broken out. Muttering the words, "Treachery, Ahaziah," he turned the chariot and hastily fled. But an arrow from Jehu pierced him through and through¹ next moment, and he fell out of his chariot dying, close to the very field of Naboth in which Elijah had said that the crime of Ahab would be avenged. To stop and cast the body into Naboth's ground, that the words of the prophet might be literally fulfilled, detained Jehu a moment, and gave Ahaziah a passing advantage. Fleeing straight south towards Jerusalem, he had crossed Esdraelon and reached the "hollow,"² or perhaps "rough ascent," at Engannim—the Fountain of the Gardens³—leading to Ibleam, the present Belame, on the edge of the hills of Samaria, before he was overtaken. There, however, an arrow mortally wounded him, but he managed to drive on to the fortified town Megiddo, not far off, where he died.⁴ Thence, his attendants, were able

¹ 2 Kings ix. 24.

² *Conder*; but Gesenius translates the words "the ascent of the whelps;" Mühlau and Volck render the word "a height."

³ *Dict. of the Bible*, art. *Gur*.

⁴ It is said in 2 Chron. xxii. 9, that he was hidden in Samaria and caught there and slain. "And when they had slain him they buried him." In 2 Kings ix. 27 he is said to have died at Megiddo and to have been taken thence to Jerusalem and buried in the royal tombs. Stanley thinks he may have been taken from Megiddo to Samaria after he was wounded, but that would have been to have put him into the power of Jehu, and besides, it is said that he died at Megiddo. There is, apparently, some corruption of the text.

to carry the body to Jerusalem ; Jehu being too busy to hinder them.

Jezebel, now a woman approaching sixty, had seen her son's murder from her palace windows, on the line of the town wall, overlooking the plain. But her spirit was as haughty and imperious as ever ; for, with all her faults, she at least knew no fear. Ordering her maids to paint her eyelids with lead ore, to make them look larger and brighter, and tiring her head,—perhaps to show that she was unmoved at the prospect of death, but possibly in the thought that Jehu might fancy it would strengthen his position to take her nominally into his harem, as kings took over the wives of their predecessors,—she placed herself in the high latticed window of the palace tower,¹ and awaited his approach. She knew her fate hung on a thread, for who did not hate her—but she hastened it by a taunt. “What came of Zimri, who murdered his master as thou hast done ?” was her haughty greeting to Jehu.² “Are any of you on my side ?” shouted he, in reply, halting as he rode up. Two or three eunuchs, looking out from behind her, answered the summons, for even in the palace she had no friends. “Then throw her down” cried Jehu, and a moment after she lay broken and mangled on the ground, at his feet ; her blood splashing up on the walls and on his horses. Another instant, and the wheels of his chariot crashed over her, that he might say he had trampled her under foot.³ He could now rest for a time. Driving into the palace as its master, he ordered refreshment after his long and wearisome journey. The first act in the tragedy was over. Cheered by food and

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. vi. 4.

² This seems the meaning, 2 Kings ix. 32.

³ *Ibid.*, ver. 33.

drink, he could even be generous. "Let them go out and bury the cursed woman, for after all she is a king's daughter." But the half wild town dogs which swarm in all Eastern cities had anticipated interference.¹ Nothing was left of her but the skull, the feet and the palms of the hands. Elijah's words had come true.

Jehu had founded a dynasty that was to last 114 years; twice as long as any in Israel before it. But there was



TREADING THE CONQUERED UNDER FOOT.—Wady Sheikh.

still much, in his opinion, to be done. Half measures did not please him. He would root out all connected

¹ Dean Stanley imagines the body to have been cast on the mounds, outside the walls, on which all the offal of the town was thrown. These may have been near the palace windows, but it hardly seems probable even in the unsanitary and filthy East.

Bruce saw the town dogs in Abyssinia eating the bodies of state criminals just killed.

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with Ahab, with a relentless sternness hitherto unequalled in the history of the monarchy. Samaria was not as yet in his power. No fewer than seventy sons of Ahab's vast polygamous family—some of them doubtless children¹—lived there in charge of the leading men. One of these might strike for his father's throne. Writing a letter to their guardians, Jehu, knowing his power, sent them a defiance. As they had control of the capital, with its magazines of arms and strong defences, he told them, with bitter irony, they might perhaps wish to set up a rival to him. A submissive answer being returned, he threw off disguise. "Let them, if they were loyal, send the heads of the whole seventy at once to Jezreel?" This was presently done, and he could now feel secure. The dynasty of Omri, after reigning about fifty years, had been exterminated. Two rows of heads piled up at the gate of the palace attested the fact. But even this massacre was not enough. All the courtiers of the late king and of his father, and all connected with them, even to the palace priests, were killed.²

Now at last Jehu could enter Samaria, but his journey thither was stained with more blood. Forty-two of Joram's sons or nephews³ had set out from Jerusalem to visit him; and were as yet ignorant of his fate or that of their own king. They had reached the "Shearing House," a now unknown spot, between Jezreel and Samaria, frequented by the shepherds of the plain. It

¹ 2 Kings x. 1.

² Graetz thinks that 2 Kings x. 11, refers to those by whom Ahab's sons had been murdered. Jehu he fancies treats them as criminals for the act which he had demanded. He could thus better screen himself from such an increase of guilt.

³ 2 Kings x. 12-14. 2 Chron. xxii. 8.

was on Jehu's way, and they were instantly arrested and put to death on his arrival; their bodies being thrown into the huge rain-water cistern of the village, as those of our own countrywomen were cast, during the Indian Mutiny, into the well of Cawnpore.

Riding on, Jehu encountered one in whose fierce but honest zeal for Jehovah worship he justly reckoned on finding hearty support. It was Jonadab, son of Rechab the "Rider,"¹ whom the influence of Elijah had led to found a new austere sect of Arab-like Nazarites, famous in those days as zealots for the pure worship of Jehovah.² Invited into Jehu's chariot, he eagerly joined him, and the two rode together into Samaria, doubtless planning to annihilate Baal worship in Israel. To Jonadab, all who had joined in it were an abomination. He was ready to cut them off, root and branch.

Hitherto nothing had passed to mark Jehu as opposed to the Phœnician idolatry. He might secretly be disposed to favour or at least to tolerate it. The heathen priests of the palace had fallen because connected with the ruined dynasty. Profound dissimulation and intrepid daring equally characterized the new king, for, amidst all this apparent indifference, he had determined to extinguish Baal worship in blood. Jonadab and he now matured their plans to do so. A great festival of the god was proclaimed; Ahab had served him a little, but Jehu would serve him much. All the followers of the god through the whole land were commanded, on pain of death, to appear, dressed in the special garment worn at a high feast of the idol. On the fixed day a vast assembly gathered in the great Baal temple in Samaria. The usual cry was raised, that no one but a votary of the god was to remain, to see the holy mysteries. Jehu,

¹ See page 60.

² *Ibid.*

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as if the foremost among these, and most devoted, stood, accompanied by Jonadab, at the great altar, and offered burnt sacrifice to the idol; no symptom of the treachery he designed showing itself on his unmoved features. But he had placed armed men at the doors; some to enter at his order, while others remained to prevent escape. The sacrifice ended, the mask was dropped. At a given signal the whole gay multitude were mercilessly cut down. The hideous massacre over, the image of Baal was dragged from the inner fortress-like sanctuary in which it towered aloft, and, with all the symbols and statues of the other deities around,¹ was thrown down and broken to pieces. The temple itself was then razed to the ground, and its site contemptuously turned into a depository of the filth of the town. Baal worship was for ever rooted out from Israel, though, strange to say, the Asherah in Samaria escaped the general destruction,² for it was still standing in the next reign. Jehovah worship was once more triumphantly established as the national faith, but under the symbols of the golden calves of Bethel and Dan. Yet Jehu was moved by policy only, not by high religious principles.

The death of King Ahaziah was the signal for an equally startling revolution in Judah. He had been the youngest son of Jehoram, for the Arabs in their invasion a few years before, probably as the hired allies of the Philistines, having captured the royal harem and all the king's sons but one, had spared the former and killed the latter. Ahaziah, then known as Jehoahaz, was the only survivor.³ Controlled by his mother,⁴ Athaliah, Baal worship had been vigorously maintained in Jerusalem during his reign, though there does not seem to have been a forcible

¹ Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 572.

² 2 Kings xiii. 6.

³ 2 Chron. xxi. 17.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxii. 3.

suspension of the worship of Jehovah, or any formal persecution of His servants. He had been king only a year, when murdered by Jehu, at the early age of twenty-three.¹

The vast families of the past reigns—children of many different mothers—had now been almost extirpated by family feuds; by the massacre of so many princes by the Arabs; and by the fierce bloodthirstiness of Jehu.² Ahaziah, however, had left sons, for Eastern kings marry when almost boys, and there were still a number of personages more or less nearly connected with the throne. But all his children were too young to reign,³ or act alone, and Athaliah found the throne within her reach, if she chose to seize it. Fiercely ambitious and utterly unscrupulous, the opportunity was instantly embraced. Every one even distantly of the race of David was forthwith slain. Pity might have moved her to spare her grandchildren, but she had no heart. To prevent their future rivalry they were remorselessly murdered,⁴ one baby, only, of about two months old—the future Jehoash—escaping. Hurrying him and his nurse into a secret chamber in the priests' quarter of the temple, his aunt Jehoshabeath,⁵ the daughter of Jehoram, and wife of the high priest Jehoiada, was able to preserve him and his faithful attendant. The line of David had at last only

¹ For forty-two, 2 Chron. xxii. 2, read twenty-two. *Ewald Thenius. Keil. The Sept. has twenty.*

² 2 Kings x. 11.

³ In 2 Chron. xxii. 9, for, "So the house of Azariah had no power to keep still the kingdom," read, "And the house of Azariah had none who were able for the kingdom."

⁴ *Ewald, Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 617.

⁵ 2 Chron. xxii. 11. Called Jehosheba, 2 Kings xi. 2. She was Ahaziah's sister, but the daughter of another mother than Athaliah.

a feeble infant as its representative, but he was carefully guarded in the safe shelter of the sacred precincts. Meanwhile Athaliah gave herself up with the fanatical zeal of her mother, to establish Baal worship in city and country. The temple might remain in the hands of the national party. Her thoughts were elsewhere. For the first time, a queen sat on the Jewish throne, for women had not yet sunk in the East to the insignificance to which Mahometanism has consigned them.

Jehoiada, the high priest, had held his high dignity apparently from the later years of king Jehoshaphat. He was already an old man, though it is hard to fix his exact age.¹ A relic of better times, he retained their spirit amidst the spreading degeneracy of the later reigns. Loyal to Jehovah and to the House of David, he devoted himself to the restoration of the ancient faith and of the royal cause. Biding his time, he steadily prepared for a revolution. To oppose Athaliah in the first flush of her usurpation was hopeless, but it became easier as disaffection increased, through her foreign practices and tastes. To have Phenician favourites at court; to see Baal worship rampant in the holy city; to feel that the city of David, and what was left of his kingdom, were being lowered to a mere Tyrian province, roused general indignation. At last, in the seventh year of Athaliah's reign, things were ripe for change. Jehoiada had already won over the officers of the queen's body guard, and her "runners," five in number,² and having brought them to the temple, and sworn them, by a solemn oath,

¹ Lord A. Hervey, art. *Jehoiada*, *Dict. of Bible*.

² 2 Kings xi. 4. The body guard are called "Carians" by Ewald and Graetz. If they be right, then adventurers had come from the south-west province of Asia Minor. How little we know of the movements of tribes and nations in those remote ages!

to fidelity, showed them the young king, now a child of about seven. His next step was to send them through the country to invite the priests, Levites, and local elders or "chiefs of the fathers" to Jerusalem—probably on one of the three great annual feasts, when their assembling would not attract attention. These also, having been sworn with due care and secrecy, to stand by the young prince, were permitted to see him,¹ and took the oath of fidelity. It only remained to bring matters to a crisis. Arrangements were made to hold the different gates of the temple with a strong force, and to occupy the priests' court in the same way; the space before it being left for others friendly to the revolution. To secure the requisite number of guards, the out-going courses of Levites were not dismissed as usual, but joined with those who should have taken their places.² Spears and small and large shields, which had belonged to David's guards, and had been laid up in the temple for 150 years, as well nigh sacred, were brought out and put in the hands of the officers; if only to remind them that it was for David's heir they were contending. The other guards had weapons of their own. The day chosen was the Sabbath, when crowds would gather in the temple.³ When this had arrived, and the people filled the wide courts, the young king was brought out to a central platform,⁴ raised between the former site of the brazen altar and the temple, and flanked by lines of armed men. Jehoiada now placed the crown on his head; and after doing so,⁵ laid gently on it a roll of the law of Moses.⁶ In after

¹ 2 Chron. xxiii. 3.

² *Ibid.* ver. 8.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Graetz calls it a "pillar-like seat." *Gesch.*, vol. ii. p. 54.

⁵ *Bertheau. Thenius.*

⁶ Testimony (2 Kings xi. 12; 2 Chron. xxiii. 11),—"law."

years the act would remind him that he was bound to rule according to its directions, and even to write out a copy, and read it daily.¹ This done, there came the solemn anointing and homage. The rod of Jesse had once more blossomed; there was again a king of the root of David. Loud cries of "God bless the king" rent the air, amidst wild clapping of hands, and tumultuous exultation. Athaliah, hitherto ignorant of what was afoot, now first learnt her danger. But she had all her mother's bravery. Commanding her litter to be brought she instantly came in person to the temple. There the scene might have appalled even so stout a heart. The young king stood, crowned, on the platform, surrounded by the chief men. Choirs of Levites were chanting a coronation psalm; the temple band was playing; trumpeters ever and anon pealed out loud flourishes, and the multitude in and beyond the courts were hailing the king with wild acclamations.² Rending her clothes in her rage, she could only scream out, "Treason, treason," and wait to see if any would rally to her side. But Jehoiada soon decided her fate. "Lead her outside the sacred bounds, between your ranks," cried he to the guards, "and kill her when she is on common ground." Forthwith the crowd opened, and the doomed queen was hurried on³ till she reached the chariot gate of the palace, and there she was slain.

¹ Deut. xvii. 18-20. That this incident is mentioned in both Kings and Chronicles proves that the law was in existence at least as early as the time of Joash; a fact that bears hard on the theory of its being of no earlier date than the Exile, as the Robertson Smith critics of the day assume.

² 2 Chron. xxiii. 13, for "such as taught to sing," read "leading the chant of."

³ 2 Kings xi. 15.

The overthrow of Baal worship followed. The temple of the sun god, built, apparently, close to that of Jehovah, was at once demolished; its altars and images destroyed. Mattan, its high priest, was cut down as he stood before one of the former.¹ Unlike the reformation of Jehu, however, there was no further bloodshed. No partisans of Athaliah showed themselves either in the city or kingdom. Revolution could not have been more gentle or more popular. Both Israel and Judah were at last free from the presence of heathenism.

Jehoiada now strove to restore Jehovah worship to its former glory. The courses of priests and Levites were reorganized on the footing established by David,² and the services of the temple re-established. But the general feeling prevented the high places sacred to Jehovah, throughout the land, from being destroyed, notwithstanding the command in the law that sacrifice and incense should be offered only in the temple.³ Even it, however, had been in part mutilated to furnish materials for the house of Baal, but measures were now taken to repair it. These, unfortunately, were not carried out; for after twenty-three years,⁴ it still lay in partial ruins. The priests had been instructed to devote to its restoration the money received in payment of vows, or as free gifts,⁵ but nothing had been done. Vested interests had been affected by the arrangement; work outside their

¹ 2 Kings xi. 18.

² 2 Chron. xxiii. 18.

³ Deut. xii. 5, 6. It is, as I cannot but think, idle to argue from the fact of no temple existing for ages after the entrance into Canaan, that Deut. must have been written at a late date. If there be a prophetic element in Scripture, why should laws not have been made in anticipation of what was foreseen, especially as the centralization of worship was distinctly designed, when practicable?

⁴ 2 Kings xii. 6.

⁵ 2 Kings xii. 4.

sphere had been laid on them; the people had no satisfactory proof that the money given was laid out as they wished, and contributions fell off. Above all, there was no leading spirit to infuse life and zeal into the priesthood at large. They had been ordered to collect the special tax of half a shekel a head, appointed by Moses to be raised for the Tabernacle,¹ but they put off the task. Another arrangement was consequently made. Depriving them of all control of the funds, Jehoiada himself,² and the king's scribe, undertook to check the temple receipts, for which a chest, provided with a slit to allow coin to enter, was placed near the altar. The "trespass money" and "sin money" alone were left to the priests.³ A proclamation calling on all to pay the temple tax which the Levites had neglected to gather, resulted in its being brought to Jerusalem. Honest superintendents⁴ paid the workmen directly; energy was infused into the undertaking, and the restoration was at last rapidly accomplished.⁵ Other measures were taken to provide the gold and silver needed for the service, and, after a long delay, the people saw the sanctuary once more in its full glory.⁶

Meanwhile the small heathen party, though crushed for the time, kept together; but it could do nothing so long as Jehoiada lived. An organized temple guard appointed by him protected the sacred building from surprise or injury.⁷ At his death, however, things altered greatly.

¹ 2 Chron. xxiv. 6-9. Exod. xxx. 12, 13, 14, 16. Num. i. 50. Acts vii. 44.

² By his officer. 2 Chron. xxiv. 11.

³ 2 Kings xii. 16. Nam. v. 8; xviii. 8, 9.

⁴ Levites. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 11.

⁵ 2 Kings xii. 15. See on the whole history, 2 Chron. xxiv. 4-14.

⁶ 2 Kings xxii. 4-7. 2 Chron. xxiv. 13, 14.

⁷ 2 Kings xi. 18. Jer. xxix. 26.

Honoured by a grand funeral, and a burial in the city of David. among the kings whose race he had served so well, the influence he had exercised on Jehoash passed away with his death. The "princes"¹ of Judah, that is, the heads of the courtly families, had supported Athaliah in her devotion to Baal worship. The rich and powerful Phenicia was to the upper Hebrew classes of that day what Normandy was to the court of the Confessor, or Paris, under Louis Quatorze, to the later Stuarts. The worship of Jehovah might do for the common people; that of Baal was the only one fit for the great. While Jehoiada lived, they had stood aloof. At his death, however, they once more raised their heads, and having given in their adhesion to Jehoash, were restored to their old influence and authority. Their return to favour was fatal to Jehoiada's reformation. Heathenism once more enjoyed the support of the crown. It had at first shown itself under Solomon as the religion of queens; Athaliah, a woman, had reintroduced it; under Jehoash it was revived as that of the fashionable upper class, whom Athaliah's influence had brought to ape foreign manners. Asherahs and images of Baal once more rose in Judah, but the mass of the people as yet remained true to the national faith, and the priesthood, who had crowded from Israel to the southern kingdom in Jeroboam's reign, were loyal to it. Prophets also denounced the apostasy, and among them one who might well have commanded the respect of the king—Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, now high priest in his stead. He had grown up with Jehoash from childhood, and was connected with him by blood,² besides being the son of him

¹ Translated elsewhere in Chronicles, "captains," "chiefs," "rulers," "governors," "general," "stewards."

² He was the king's cousin.

to whom the king had owed his throne and his life. Standing in his place at the great altar, with the crowd of worshippers looking up from the lower courts, he earnestly condemned the heathenism of the crown and court. Furious at such a public rebuke, Jehoshaphat had the baseness to order him to be killed where he stood, and this was at once done; the nobles, or some of the people, stoning him to death on the spot, perhaps with fragments left from the repairs of the temple. Such a deed in such a place produced a deep and abiding impression. Even in the days of Christ it was remembered with horror how he fell in the very court of the priests, between the temple building and the great altar,¹ and tradition added that the crime was committed on a Sabbath day, which was also the great Day of Atonement, and that nothing could efface or dry up his blood.² So soon had the king's

¹ Matt. xxiii. 35. He is there called the son of Barachias. This name has apparently crept into the text from a marginal gloss which confounded him with Zachariah the prophet, who was the son of Berechiah, or with another Zachariah, who was the son of Jeberechiah. Isa. viii. 2.

² R. Jochanan said: Eighty thousand priests were killed for the blood of Zacharias. R. Juda asked R. Achsa, Whereabouts they killed Zacharias, whether in the court of the women or in the court of Israel? He answered: Neither in the court of Israel, nor in the court of the women, but in the court of the priests. And that was not done to his blood which useth to be done to the blood of a ram or of a kid. Concerning these it is written: "And he shall pour out his blood and cover it with dust." They committed seven sins in that day. They killed a priest, a prophet, and a judge; they shed the blood of an innocent man; they polluted the court; and that day was the Sabbath day, and the Day of Expiation. When therefore Nebuzar-adan* went up thither he saw the blood bubbling. So he said to them, "What meaneth this?" "It is the blood," said they, "of calves, lambs and rams."

* The officer appointed over Jerusalem at its capture, by Nebuchadnezzar.

gratitude to Jehoiada faded away. But the words of the martyr as he died—"Jehovah look on it and requite it"—were to be terribly fulfilled.

Both Israel and Judah in these years had the danger of a Syrian war constantly threatening them; and, indeed, had only too often to mourn the ruin and slaughter of fierce invasions. Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Ahab, and Jehoram, had alike suffered in this way; the kings of Damascus steadily assailing them in the hope of conquering the whole territory of the Ten Tribes. There was only peace when it was for a time required, to gather strength for a fresh attack, or while paralyzed by the fear of Assyria. Syrian wars, in fact, had formed the background of Jewish history from the time of the division and consequent weakening of the nation, after the death of Solomon. Under Jehu, the hereditary enemy was to prove more dangerous than ever, extending his invasions, for the first time, even to Judah.¹ Hazael, the new king of Damascus, proved fierce and able beyond any

which we have offered on the altar." "Bring then," said he, "calves, lambs, and rams, that I may try whether this be their blood." They brought them and slew them, and that blood still bubbled, but their blood did not bubble. "Discover the matter to me," said he, "or I will tear your flesh with iron rakes." Then they said to him, "This was a priest, a prophet, and a judge, who foretold to Israel all these evils which we have suffered from you, and we rose up against him and slew him." "But I," said he, "will appease him." He brought the Rabbis and slew them upon that blood, and yet it was not pacified; he brought the children out of the school and slew them upon it, and yet it was not quiet. So that he slew upon it 94,000, and yet it was not quiet. He drew near to it himself and said, "O Zacharias, Zacharias! thou hast destroyed the best of thy people, would you have me destroy them all?" Then it was quiet and did not bubble any more. *Talmud*, quoted by *Lightfoot*, on Matt. xxiii. 35.

¹ 2 Kings xii. 17. 2 Chron. xxiv. 23.

of his predecessors. Forced to justify his usurpation by restoring the honour of his kingdom, which had suffered greatly from the inglorious reign of Benhadad II., he threw his whole energies into wars of conquest, and won himself a name worshipped by his countrymen almost with divine honours as late as the Christian era.¹ The weakness and confusion attending the changes of dynasty in Israel had, during long periods, made vigorous defence against foreign enemies impossible. Jeroboam, Baasha, and Omri, had alike been forced to resign more or less territory at the beginning of their reign, and Jehu, in the same way, in spite of his signal ability, soon after his accession, had to see the whole region east of the Jordan seized and annexed for the time to the kingdom of Damascus, by Hazael, perhaps in alliance with Tyre.² The horrors of this terrible period were long remembered. Children had been dashed on the stones, the young men ruthlessly cut down, the matrons batchered with the most appalling cruelty, and many of the men torn to pieces with the iron spikes of threshing sledges.³ Overpowered for the moment, Jehu appears to have been forced to an ignominious peace, which left his whole kingdom open to the Syrians. By this means, apparently, Hazael was able to carry his ravages as far south as Judah.⁴ There, as it would seem, with the aid of Edom and of the Phenicians, now no longer interested in a Hebrew alliance, he defeated the Jewish army, murdering the prisoners of rank, and carrying off large numbers of the population to slavery in Edom and Tyre, whence many were sold to distant nations.⁵ The destruction of

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. iv. 6.

² 2 Kings x. 32, 33.

³ 2 Kings viii. 12; x. 32, 33. Amos i. 3, 4.

⁴ 2 Kings xii. 18. 2 Chron. xxiv. 23.

⁵ Joel iii. 6. Amos i. 6-10.

the southern kingdom appeared, indeed, so imminent, that Jehoshaphat was glad to buy off the enemy. All the miscellaneous gifts of the temple received since the days of Jehoshaphat were surrendered; with the other temple treasures and those of the palace that could be seized.¹ The land, besides, was plundered. Nor was calamity limited to the miseries of war. Nature itself seemed to have become an enemy. A long drought had burned up the land; the seed rotted under the clods; the threshing floors were bare, the barns fallen down, and everything green had withered away. The cattle moaned in the barren, iron-bound pastures; the flocks wandered about in distress for water; flames of fire seemed to have swept over the land, and the very streams were everywhere dried up.²

But still worse was in store. Locusts come only in seasons of special drought, and they now appeared in swarm upon swarm. The kingdom seemed doomed.

A contemporary picture of the visitation fortunately survives.

"A fire devours before them; behind them glows a flame; the land is as the garden of Eden before them, but behind them is a desolate wilderness! They spare nothing as they pass! Like horses in their shape, they run swift as horsemen; as with the bounding noise of chariots they leap onwards over the crests of the mountains; like crackling fire when it devours the stubble; like the sword of a great army prepared for war. The people tremble before them, all faces grow fiery red with terror! They run like mighty men, they climb walls like men of war, every one marches straight on; no one turns from his path. No one crowds on the other; each keeps his own course. They may fall in heaps but they keep on their march, unbroken.³ They swarm through

¹ 2 Kings xii. 18.

² Joel i. 16-20.

³ Joel ii. 8 (Heb.).

the city; they climb up the walls; they make their way into the houses; they enter at the lattices, like a thief. The earth seems to quake before them, the very heavens seem to tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark, and the stars withdraw their shining.

The purple vine, the green fig-tree, the grey olive, the scarlet pomegranate, the golden corn, the waving palm, the fragrant citron vanished before them, and the trunks and branches were left bare and white by their devouring teeth.¹ God had visited His land in wrath. The great day of His judgments for their sins had come.² The drunkard might lament the new wine thus snatched from his lips; the priests sigh over the flour offering and drink offering cut off from the house of Jehovah, for there was neither wine, nor oil, nor flour, and the altar stood black and cold. The husbandmen and vinedressers might mourn for the wheat and the barley, the vine and the fig-tree, for all the trees of the field were blasted, and joy had withered away from the sons of men.³

But the prophet was still a great power in the land and one appeared in this terrible hour. Joel, a priest⁴ of Jerusalem, seized with the prophetic spirit, came forward, demanding that a solemn fast should be held. All must attend—the elders, the children, the very babes,

¹ Joel ii. 3-10. Dr. Pusey thinks that the picture of the locusts was a symbolical description of the Assyrian armies. *Minor Prophets, Introd. to Joel*. In 1881 two hundred and fifty tons of locusts were buried in Cyprus, each ton numbering over 90,000,000 of these pests. *Daily News*.

² Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 370.

³ Deut. xxviii. 21 ff.

⁴ Joel i. 5-15.

⁵ Most authorities believe Joel to have been a priest, but Dr. Pusey thinks that he speaks of the order and of their ministrations as outside his own sphere, and that he was a layman. *Minor Prophets, Introd. to Joel*.

the bridegroom from his chamber and the bride from her closet.¹ Nor was there any hesitation. The harsh blast of the sacred horns proclaimed the assembly. The whole population approached and cast themselves on the earth with wailing supplications, in front of the altar. The priests gathered in their multitude in their own court, the space between the front, or porch of the temple, and the fireless altar,² and lay with their faces on the ground, in black sackcloth, instead of their usual white robes.³ No music of psalms or instruments rose, but in its place only the piercing cries and laments of people and priests alike. The very altar was covered with sackcloth.⁴ The people as they lay prostrate cast ashes on their heads with ceaseless cries of sorrow. The priests, spreading their black mantles⁵ before the doors of the temple, as if to show its Invisible Lord the depth of their grief, shrieked aloud, "Spare Thy people, O Lord; give not Thine heritage to reproach, lest the heathen make us a byword, and ask, Where is their God?"⁶

This strange day of humiliation appeared to be blest. A rich fall of rain came soon after;⁷ a full harvest might at last be hoped for, and the favour of God seemed returning to the refreshed land and its people. With such indications of better days, the tone of the prophet

¹ Joel ii. 16.

² The porch was a structure as broad as the temple, and half the depth. The altar, which was of brass, ran along the whole front of the temple, for it was as broad and stood out as far, and was square. 2 Chron. iii. 4; viii. 12; iv. 1. There was an open space between the porch or portico and the altar; these forming its front and back. This was the court of the priests, across which they had to go to enter the temple.

³ Joel i. 13.

⁴ Judging from Judith iv. 11.

⁵ *Fritzsche*, on Judith iv. 11.

⁶ Joel ii. 17.

⁷ Joel ii. 22.

in a second address, forming the latter half of the book which bears his name, changed from gloomy foreboding to the brightest anticipations. The locusts had come from the coast; the van of their huge army was east of Jerusalem; their centre covered Judah; their rear extended towards the "Great Sea." But mighty as this host had been, Jehovah was mightier. They might see it even now! Let the sadness be put away! The locusts would presently disappear, driven off by strong winds into the wilderness, the Dead Sea, and the Mediterranean; the very air of the wilderness reeking with the stench of their bodies.

"Fear not, O land," he goes on to say,¹ "rejoice and be glad, for Jehovah has done great things! Fear no longer ye beasts of the field, for the pastures are growing green again; the tree bears its fruit; the fig and the vine yield their strength! Be glad then, ye sons of Zion, and rejoice in Jehovah, your God. He has given you the autumn rain in full measure. He has poured down richly both the autumn and the spring showers! The threshing floors shall be full of wheat; the vats overflow with wine and oil, for Jehovah promises to make up to us all that the locusts—His great army—consumed. Then," he continues, in the name of God Himself, "you shall always have plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of Jehovah, your God, who has dealt so wondrously with you. Men will thus see that you are restored to My favour, and My people will never again be put to shame. Moved by your sincere repentance and humiliation at the call of My prophet, I shall return to you, and ye shall know by the blessings you enjoy that I am once more in your midst, and that I Jehovah, and none else, am your God. Nor will you, My people, ever again be put to shame.

"Nor will temporal happiness," he goes on, speaking still for Jehovah,² "be the only result of the nation turning to Me with its whole heart. When it does so, there will not be a few

¹ Joel ii. 21 ff.

² The text is paraphrased for the sake of clearness.

prophets, as now; the whole community will be filled with My Spirit. The old will have dreams by night; the young men, visions in clear day; on your very slave men and slave women, now so despised, will I pour out My Spirit."

"But while it will be thus with those who fear Me, a fearful day of wrath is in store for My enemies!¹ That day shall come with fearful signs in heaven and on earth; appearances as of blood and fire in the air; pillars of smoke like those from volcanoes; a darkening of the sun and blood-like redness in the moon.² In that day whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved, for Jerusalem and its temple shall be a refuge for all them that escape, as Jehovah has said, and among the fugitives thus saved shall be all whom Jehovah shall call.

"Hitherto," continues the human echo of the Divine voice, "Judah has been oppressed by the heathen,³ but when it has

¹ Joel ii. 30.

² The imagery is perhaps taken from the smoke and flames of war. *Dict. of the Bible*, art. *Moon*. This passage, and also Isa. xiii. 10; Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24, are thought by some to involve allusion to the mysterious awe with which eclipses were viewed by the Hebrews, in common with other nations of antiquity. The language reminds us of the signs recorded by Josephus as attending the fall of Jerusalem. "A star stood like a sword over the city; and, when the people were assembled at the Passover at the ninth hour* of the night, a light shone so strongly round the altar and the temple, that it seemed bright day, for half an hour. The eastern door of the temple, which twenty men scarcely could shut each evening, held with iron-bound bars, and very deep bolts, let into the threshold, which was one solid stone, was seen at the sixth hour† of the night to open of its own accord. Chariots and armed troops were seen through the whole country, coursing through the clouds, round the cities. At the feast of Pentecost, moreover, the priests, entering the temple by night, as was their wont, for worship, first perceived a great movement and sound, and then heard a multitudinous voice, 'Let us depart hence.'" Jos., *De Bell. Jud.*, VI. v. 3. Euseb., *H. E.*, iii. 8. A comet was also seen for a whole year.

³ Joel iii. 1 ff.

* About three in the morning.

† About midnight.

turned thus sincerely to Me this will be made to cease. Judah has been invaded, its sons and daughters carried off, and sold as slaves to distant lands, and much innocent blood shed. All this cries for punishment. My people thus led into captivity from Judah and Jerusalem must be brought back. When I make bare My arm to do this I shall stir up all the nations who have oppressed them, to gather against Jerusalem, in the valley where Jehoshaphat gained his famous victory. But its name—'the place where Jehovah judges,' will speak of a greater triumph—the judgment of God over His enemies! I will contend with them there, for My people and My heritage Israel; My people whom they have scattered; My land which they have parted among them. I remember their doings! They cast lots for My people; they exchanged a boy for a harlot; they sold a maiden for a draught of wine! Do you think, O Tyre and Sidon, and coasts of Philistia, to contend against Me, Jehovah? Will you avenge on Me what you fancy your wrongs, suffered by the victories of My people over you in the past? Will you try to do aught against Me! Right speedily will I return your folly on your own heads! You have carried off My silver and My gold from My House;¹ you have stored up in your heathen temples My best and most prized treasures; you have sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the sons of Greece,² to take them far from their country!"

"Behold, I will bring them back from the place to which you have sold them, and return your crime on your own heads by

¹ 2 Kings xii. 18.

² Heb., Sons of the Javanites. The Philistines carried off the people and the Phenicians bought them. The Tyrian slavedealers followed all armies to buy the prisoners. They hung like a cloud of vultures in the rear of Alexander's march, as far as the Indus. *Arr. Exped.*, vi. 22, 8. They attended Nicanor's advance in the same way, 1000 of them assembling at the camp of Gorgias "with silver and gold very much, to buy the children of Israel as slaves," and with chains to bind them. *Jos., Ant.*, XII. vii. 3. They gathered also in the rear of the Roman armies in great numbers. *Hieron.*, on Ezek. xxvii. 16. Children would not pay for transport and were abandoned to perish. The demand in Greece for slaves was enormous; 10,000 were bought and sold in one day at

giving your sons and daughters in their stead, as slaves into the hands of the sons of Judah, who will sell them to the Sabeans of Arabia, a people far off! I, Jehovah, have spoken it!"

Roused by this anticipation, the prophet seems to feel the battle already at hand, and animates his countrymen to the struggle.

"Dismiss then," says he, "your fears.¹ Proclaim a'oud among the heathen how little we dread them; how we await their approach! Ye mighty men of Judah, arouse! Ye men of war come on to the strife! Beat your ploughshares into swords; your pruning hooks into spears; let even the weak say, 'I am a hero.'

"Muster, all ye nations round, and assemble yourselves and advance! Lead down Thy mighty ones against them, O Jehovah, the Captain of the Host of Thy people, from Thy height of Zion!

"Let the nations be roused; let them come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there shall I, Jehovah, sit, to judge all the peoples round.

"Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest of vengeance is ripe. Come, get you down, ye warriors of Judah, from your heights; for your enemies are gathered like the heaped up grapes in the winepress, and are ready for treading; the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for as their sins are great so also will be their destruction.

"Terrible beyond words will be the tumult in the valley of judgment,² when the near approaching day of Jehovah arrives! Then shall be seen the signs that I have foretold as marking that great day of God—the darkening of sun and moon and stars! Jehovah, also, shall thunder out of Zion, His habitation, and cry aloud from Jerusalem, shaking the heavens and the earth!

"But, amidst all, Jehovah will be a refuge for His people; a strong fortress for the sons of Israel. Thus shall ye know that I, Jehovah, am your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain.

the slave market of Delos; and Athens, Egina and Corinth, in the day of their prosperity, had, between them, 1,330,000 slaves. See authorities in *Pusey*.¹ Joel iii. 9. The translation is amplified, for clearness. ² *De Wette*, "threshing."

Then shall Jerusalem be undefiled and holy, and heathen aliens will no more invade her.¹

"After that day there shall never again be such want as there has been in times past. The mountains and hills will flow with wine and milk; the watercourses, now so often dry, will be filled with perennial streams; and a spring from the temple will fertilize the now barren land, even to the Valley of the Acacias!² Egypt, on the other hand, will be turned into a desolation, and Edom into a barren waste, for their cruelty to the sons of Judah, and for the innocent blood of my people they have shed in their bounds.³

"But Judah shall continue for ever; Jerusalem from generation to generation. And I will avenge on their enemies their blood which I have not avenged⁴ already, and Jehovah will reign in Zion!"⁵

Such were two public addresses of the oldest Hebrew prophet whose utterances have come down to us in any fullness: addresses the like of which no nation besides ever heard. A sense deeper and fuller than Joel dreamed lay in the inspired words he was chosen to utter, for St. Peter tells us that "the prophets enquired and searched

¹ The foreign relations of the monarchy since the conquests of heathen territory by David, and the vast spread of trade and intercourse under Solomon and his successors, had brought a large alien and heathen element into Jerusalem. Judea had, moreover, been already humbled by Shishak and by the Philistines and Arabs. All this was to cease.

² The only locality known by the name Shittim is the one opposite Jericho, in Moab. The *Sept.* has "the Valley of Rushes," as if indicating a torrent bed, often at least partially dry.

³ Egypt was then great and powerful. What it has been for ages is known to all. If the river maintain the richness of the soil, man has sunk, even amidst its fertility, to the lowest degradation. Within the last year or two great numbers of peasants died of starvation, their crops having been being carried off by the Khedive. The desolation of Edom is a by-word even in the East.

⁴ *De Wette. Arnheim and Sachs. Zunz.*

⁵ Joel iii. 21.

diligently what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." ¹ We who enjoy fuller light know that prophecy had a grander significance than the merely temporary or local, ² though, when first spoken its distant and spiritual scope could hardly have been realized.

The glowing visions of temporal prosperity were doomed to remain unfulfilled, for the nation did not, by a true and lasting reformation, act up to the conditions on which it was promised. But Joel, and perhaps other unrecorded prophets of that day, had not spoken in vain. Following as they did the religious revolution brought about by Jehoiada, the people were roused to a deeper seriousness; the old heroic spirit was rekindled; Jehovah was once more honoured as the King of Israel and its Leader in peace and war. The altered moral tone showed itself in a striking reaction from the feebleness of the past, for under Amaziah, Uzziah, and Jotham, Judah rose once more to a pitch of honour and prosperity which almost recalled the golden age of David.

It may, indeed, have been from a perverted religiousness that the troubled reign of Jehoshaphat closed by his murder. Weak and easily led, he had listened, as we have seen, after the death of Jehoiada, to the small but influential heathen party, the remnant of Athaliah's court, and had re-introduced the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth. Still worse, he had allowed the high priest Zechariah, the son of him to whom he had owed his throne, to be stoned to death in the very precincts of the temple, for nobly protesting against his craven apostasy. The vengeance foretold by the martyr had not been long delayed. Hazael's invasion of Judah and the degrading tribute by which he had been turned back from the gates of

¹ 1 Peter i. 11.

² Acts ii. 16 ff.

Jerusalem had made Jehoash equally despised and hated. Thus marked, as it seemed, by the judgments of God; humbled before his enemies; guilty of the murder of a venerated high priest in the temple itself and during the holy offices; apostate, moreover, from the ancient worship; fanatics were not wanting to mete out to him the doom he had inflicted on Zechariah. Judah and Israel, alike, had become familiar with the murder of kings, and the fate of Jehoash was in keeping with the spirit of the times. Two inmates, or "servants" of the palace—sons respectively of an Ammonitess and a Moabitess,¹—headed a conspiracy before which he fell, in the forty-seventh year of his life and the fortieth of his reign. His apostasy, his crimes, and perhaps, above all, his want of success as a king, had left him no friends. Even a burial in the royal tombs was denied him, though he was allowed to rest within the city walls.²

Jehoash had lived eighteen or twenty years after the death of Jehu,³ and the invasion by Hazael must have taken place in the twenty-fourth year of his reign,⁴ while Jehoahaz was king of Israel.⁵ The politics of these times are simply a reflection of the aggressiveness or quiet of the armies of Assyria. But Shalmaneser II. left little rest for the western countries of Asia. In the eighteenth year of his reign, he tells us,⁶ "I crossed the Euphrates for the sixteenth time. Hazael, of the land of Aram (Syria), trusting to the strength of his army, assembled it

¹ The name of one of the conspirators is Jozachar in 2 Kings xii. 21, but in 2 Chron. xxiv. 26 it is given as Zabad. The MSS., however, show this to be a mere clerical error.

² 2 Kings xii. 12. 2 Chron. xxiv. 23-25.

³ According to the present Biblical chronology, Jehu died in 855. Jehoash in 837.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxiv. 23.

⁵ In his second year.

⁶ Layard's *Inscriptions*, pl. 92.

in countless numbers, and entrenched himself in the tops of the mountains, on the edge of the Lebanon range. "I fought with him and gained a great victory, taking 16,000 of his soldiers with their arms; 1,121 of his chariots; 410 cavalry soldiers, and all his baggage. To save his life he fled, and I pursued him. I besieged him in Damascus, his capital, and destroyed its towers. I then marched to the hills of the Haurân and destroyed, laid desolate, and burned with fire, towns without number, and led away innumerable prisoners. I then marched to the mountains near the Mediterranean, and set up my royal likeness there. At that time I received tribute from Tyre, Sidon, and from Jehu, the son of Omri."¹

The hideous savagery of which the Great King boasts in the narrative of his campaigns might well strike terror into all weak States, and make them eager to purchase immunity from invasion by becoming his tributary vassals. He tells us that he swept all hostile lands like a whirlwind, slew all the fighting men of cities that opposed him, built pyramids of heads at the town gates, burned alive the sons and daughters of the chief men, and spread devastation and death.² He glories in having raised no fewer than five of his ghastly scull-pyramids. Three years after his first attack on Hazael, he invaded Syria again and destroyed more of its towns, afterwards marching to the coast to receive the tribute of Tyre,

¹ Obelisk Inscription. *Records of the Past*, vol. v. pp. 34, 41. Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, pp. 107-8. Jehu is called "the son of Omri," either from ignorance on the part of the Assyrians that he had massacred Omri's descendants, or simply in reference to his inheriting the royal dignity which they had formerly known as held by Omri. On the Monuments, etc., at the Nahr el Kelb, see *Trans. Soc. Bib. Ant.*, vol. vii. p. 331 ff.

² Monolith Inscription. *Records of the Past*, vol. iii. pp. 84-100. Menant, p. 100.

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Sidon and Gebal, which seems to have been left unpaid.¹

That Jehu should have become the vassal of Assyria, as is twice recorded by Shalmaneser, was apparently the



THE OBELISK OF SHALMANESER II.

¹ Obelisk Inscription. *Records of the Past*, vol. v. p. 35. *Menant*, p. 101. *Schrader*, p. 105. Shalmaneser had led 120,000 men against Benhadad and the Syrian league. This gives us an idea of the size of his armies. *Menant*, p. 117. Hazael had been designated to the throne of Damascus by Elisha about the same time as Jehu gained that of Samaria. *Menant* thinks the death of Ahab happened in the year B.C. 853. Adding fourteen years for the reigns of Ahaziah and Joram, this would make the accession of Jehu fall in the year 839, instead of 833 as by the common reckoning. *Menant*, p. 118.

only course left to him if he desired to escape utter destruction from Syria on the one hand, or Assyria on the other. By doing homage to the Great King he at once secured his territories from invasion, and obtained protection against Hazael, though such an alliance would naturally embitter the fierce Syrian, and may have been the immediate cause of his repeated attacks. These, however, brought down on him the wrath of Shalmaneser, as an outrage on one of his vassals, and thus in the end effectually crippled Damascus.¹

The famous obelisk on which the fact of Jehu's



becoming tributary to Assyria is recorded, is of black basalt, and is about seven feet high, and two feet broad at the base. On each side, sculptures, in five compartments, fill about half the space, the rest being covered with the royal annals. One of the subjects depicted is, fortunately, the payment of tribute by Jehu, and thus we have a glimpse of the details of life in Israel in his time. The tribute bearers are represented in robes elaborately fringed, and reaching almost to the feet. They wear hats

¹ Jehu's alliance with Assyria was an anticipation of what happened in the reigns of Pekah and Ahaz, except that Ahaz took the place of Jehu, while Pekah allied himself with Syria against Judah, in revenge for this.

almost like Phrygian bonnets; their arms are bare from the elbow; and their beards and hair elaborately curled, like those of the Assyrians. They bring bars of silver and gold; gold in plates; gold table utensils; gold drinking vessels, and others, also of gold, for lifting wine from the great central vase in which it was mixed at banquets; bars of lead; a sceptre for the Great King; spears, etc.¹ Dress and personal adornment were thus as carefully studied in those days as now; the textile arts flourished, with all the trades this implies, and life in the upper ranks had not a little of the splendour of modern times, as well as abundant conveniences, comforts and even luxuries. It would seem indeed that Samaria could even boast of a metal coinage, for a coin lately noticed in the British Museum appears to belong to Jehu's reign. The characters on it resemble exactly those on the Moabite stone, except that they are drawn more perfectly. Jehu is represented as standing in a "winged chariot," his name appearing round the edge of the coin, over his head.²

The influence of Elijah acting through his successor had triumphed in the revolution Jehu effected, but there was no such improvement in the national fortunes as might have been expected. Henceforward, indeed, notwithstanding temporary gleams of prosperity, the history of Israel is one of steadily advancing decay. An external reformation had been brought about by physical force, but it left the morals of the people as before. It was to little effect, therefore, that the foreign element in religion and politics had been cast out, or the kingdom again set in a measure on its original basis. Jehovah might

¹ Inscription on the Obelisk. Schrader's Translation. *Keil-inschr.*, 106.

² *Pal. Fund Report*, 1881, p. 19.

be once more honoured, but it was in connection with the calves of Bethel and Dan. Jeroboam's sanctuary at the former was still honoured as the "king's chapel" and "the royal" or "national temple."¹ The strength of Samaria again became the popular boast.² Israel and Judah no longer cultivated the close relations that had marked the dynasty of Omri. Yet the prophets acted for the time in harmony with the rulers, and the popular liberties were more respected than in the past. It was of signal advantage, moreover, to the kingdom, that Elisha, the founder of the new royal house, lived for about forty-five years after its accession,³ to guide and counsel it. But he did so without taking any prominent part in public affairs; devoting himself, apparently, in the main, to the great task of superintending the schools of the prophets, which we often find him visiting.⁴

After a reign of twenty-eight years, Jehu⁵ died at Samaria and was buried there; Jehoahaz⁶ his son, ascending the vacant throne.⁷ Jehoash,⁸ of Judah, was now a man of about twenty-seven, and had still eighteen or twenty years to reign, but we are not told the age of Jehoahaz. The seventeen years of his rule saw Israel reduced by Hazael to the lowest depression. Constant inroads of the Syrians drove the population from their homes;⁹ a number of towns west of the Jordan were taken;¹⁰ and the Moabites and others made constant forays from the east.

¹ Amos vii. 13.

² Amos vi. 1.

³ Ewald *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 54.

⁴ See p. 116.

⁵ = "Jehovah is Hē."

⁶ = "Whom Jehovah upholds."

⁷ Keil thinks that Jehu died in the twenty-second year of Jehoash of Judah, not the twenty-third as in 2 Kings xiii. 1. *Kommentar.* Josephus thinks it was in the twenty-first year.

⁸ = "The gift of Jehovah."

⁹ 2 Kings xiii. 5.

¹⁰ 2 Kings xiii. 25.

Things had indeed sunk very low. The whole of Gilead and Bashan as far south as the Arnon was in the hands of Syria,¹ and Hazael even forced Jehoahaz to reduce his army to no more than fifty horsemen and ten chariots, with 10,000 infantry. The northern kingdom was, in fact, well nigh destroyed. Its people were haughtily trodden under foot, like the dust, by their oppressor.² Three years before the death of Jehoash of Judah, Jehoahaz was succeeded by his son Joash, who was able somewhat to revive the fortunes of his country. Living on the most cordial terms with the aged Elisha, who still survived as his truest counsellor and the surest protector of the kingdom,³ he set himself earnestly to deliver it from its overwhelming difficulties. Hazael had died about the same time as Jehoahaz, and had been succeeded by his son Benhadad III., previously the commander of his armies⁴; a man apparently much inferior in ability to his father. Fortunately for Israel, the power of Syria was already broken by Assyria, but it was still greatly to be dreaded. From across the Jordan other assailants, also, multiplied. Eager to wrest part of the eastern territory from Syria, for their own benefit, the Ammonites ravaged Gilead, committing the most frightful atrocities.⁵ Every spring, bands of Moabites crossed the Jordan and laid waste the country.⁶ But the sixteen years of the reign of Joash saw the breaking of these heavy clouds. Among those who had not despaired of their country Elisha had always stood first, and now, in his last days, he was able to foresee the turn of the national

¹ 2 Kings x. 32, 32.² *Ibid.*, xiii. 7.³ Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 52.⁴ 2 Kings xiii. 3, 24. There is no mention of Benhadad III. in the Assyrian inscriptions.⁵ Amos i. 13.⁶ 2 Kings xiii. 20.



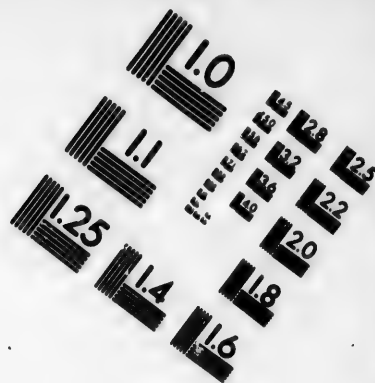
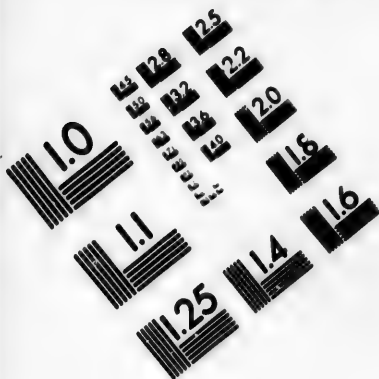
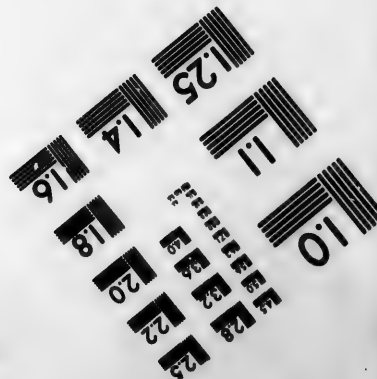
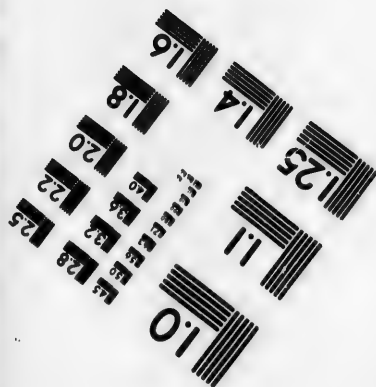
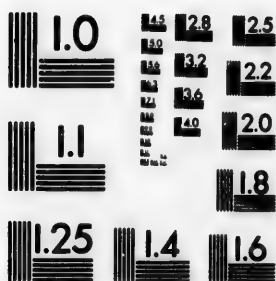


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fortunes. Struck with mortal sickness, he was visited by the king, whose grandfather he had set on the throne. Under Ahab, the prophets had been driven from the land ; but Joash came to ask Elisha's farewell counsels and receive his parting blessing. Bending over him, he wept at losing "the chariot of Israel and its horsemen ;" for the dying man had been the true defence and glory of the kingdom. But the patriotism of the seer still glowed as warmly as ever. As he lay near the lattice window for coolness, he made Joash open it, and told him to bend his bow, the favourite weapon of the age, toward the east—the direction of Damascus. Then raising himself from his couch, he laid his own feeble hands on those of the king, and bade him shoot. The act was intended as a sign of approaching deliverance. Three arrows were sped, but the king should have emptied his quiver. It was a fatal error. Had he gone on, said Elisha, he would have destroyed Syria utterly ; as it was, he would gain three victories over it.¹ One of these was won on the same field, at Aphek,² as had seen the defeat of Benhadad II. ; the scene of the others is not given, but the result of the whole was the recovery of the towns on the west of the Jordan, wrested by Hazael from king Jehoahaz.³

Joash had not however to fight with Syria and the bands of Moab and Ammon only. In the third year of his reign a new king had ascended the throne of Judah—Amaziah, the son of Jehoash,—a man in his early prime, for he was only twenty-five at his accession.⁴ Of a brave and enterprising spirit, and true to Jehovah for the greater part of his reign, he wanted the solidity and

¹ 2 Kings xiii. 14-19.

² Conder and Merrill place Aphek on the east bank of the Lake of Galilee. See p. 84.

³ 2 Kings xiii. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xiv. 1. 2 Chron. xxv. 1.

calmness which his position demanded. His first act after being firmly seated on the throne boded well. Arresting the palace servants who had murdered his father, he put them to death; but it is especially noted that he spared their children, in obedience to the humane law in Deuteronomy, which forbade a man's offspring being punished for their father's crime.¹ David had felt himself compelled by popular opinion to give up the sons of Saul to death for their father's offence, and the sons of Naboth had been killed with their father; but a better tone of feeling was slowly awaking.²

Edom had been independent for the last fifty years,³ but Amaziah determined once more to subdue it. Summoning the whole muster of fighting men of Judah, therefore, he invaded its territory, and defeated its army in the Salt Valley, at the south of the Dead Sea. Utterly worsted, the Edomites were incapable of any further active resistance. Under a late king they had built or rather excavated a new capital in one of the southern defiles of their mountains—the strange rock-hewn city of Selah—"the rock," or Petra. Lying, as it did, more than 4,000 feet above the level of the Mediterranean, at a distance of about 70 miles from the lower end of the Dead Sea, and approached only by a series of ascents, they fancied they were secure in its shelter against foreign attacks. Dwelling literally in "the clefts of the rock," they boasted in their pride that no one could bring them down from their high retreat.⁴ But Amaziah resolved to make it his own. By a bold march he seized and

¹ Deut. xxiv. 16. If this book be so late a production how is it thus referred to in Kings?

² See it advocated by Jeremiah and Ezekiel at a later time. Jer. xxxi. 30. Ezek. xviii. 23.

³ Since the reign of Jehoram of Judah.

⁴ Obad. i. 3.

plundered it; changing its name to Joktheel—in noble confession that it had been “subdued by God.” Yet the war must have been marked by a ferocity equal to that of any of the nations round. Ten thousand Edomites had been killed in the battle at the Dead Sea, but 10,000 prisoners who had been taken, were marched on to Petra and there hurled over the precipices and “broken in pieces.”¹ Rich plunder of flocks and herds, and probably of other forms of wealth, rewarded and increased the vain glory of the conqueror. Unfortunately for himself, he carried off their gods, instead of destroying them, as David had done with those of the Philistines.² Brought to Jerusalem, they proved his ruin. Tempted, one knows not how, to do so, he adopted them as the objects of his own worship, and burned incense before them; thus destroying his position among his subjects by the re-introduction of idolatry—especially that of the discredited gods of a people whom Jehovah had overthrown and whom they themselves abhorred.

Amaziah had hired a vast number of mercenary troops from Israel to help him in his enterprise, but having been warned by a prophet that their presence would be hurtful, since Ephraim dishonoured Jehovah by worshipping the calves, he dismissed them, forfeiting the 100 talents he had paid for their assistance. Enraged at this affront, they had avenged it on their way back, by plundering the cities of Judah through which they passed; 3,000 men falling in defence of their homes.³ Nothing would

¹ 2 Chron. xxv. 11, 12. In 2 Kings xiv. 7, the name Joktheel is said to have continued “unto this day.” As Amaziah’s conquest, however, was lost in the reign of Ahaz, less than a century after—the narrative in the Book of Kings must have been written very soon indeed after the event. This is to be noted.

² See vol. iii. p. 208.

³ 2 Chron. xxv. 6–10, 13.

satisfy Amaziah but war with Joash to retrieve his honour, thus wounded. Confident in his victorious army, he would listen to no dissuasion, though Joash with kindly but half contemptuous irony strove to show him his folly. "The thistle of Lebanon," said he, "sent to the cedar of Lebanon, demanding its daughter as wife to the thistle's son; but presently a wild beast, chancing to pass by, trode the vain thistle under foot."¹ "Abide at home," added he; "why shouldst thou meddle, to thy hurt." Such a strain of rebuke, however, only made Amaziah the more determined. He was resolved to "see Joash to the face," and he did so, soon after, to his grief. A battle fought on the borders, at Beth-shemesh, resulted in his utter defeat; he himself being taken prisoner. His army being dispersed, Jerusalem lay open to Joash. Thither therefore he marched, taking the captive Amaziah with him. Once more the holy city felt the calamities of war. The temple and the palace were sacked; hostages taken; the city plundered; and its wall broken down for a space of about 600 feet. But Amaziah was treated with a generosity rare in that age. Instead of dethroning him and annexing his kingdom, Joash restored him; contented with the glory of having been the first king of Israel who had taken Jerusalem. Amaziah lived fifteen years after his captor, but the deep misery he had brought on the land was never forgotten, and popular discontent at last broke out in an open revolt of Jerusalem, from which he fled to Lachish.² Pursued thither, he was seized and put to death; the poor honour being done his remains of bringing them back "upon horses" to Jerusalem, for burial in the royal tombs.

¹ 2 Chron. xxv. 18, 19.² A specially strong city.



CHAPTER VII.

THE INDIAN SUMMER OF ISRAEL.

KING OF ISRAEL.

JEROBOAM II. B.C. 823-770.

KINGS OF JUDAH.

AMAZIAH B.C. 837-808.

UZZIAH „ 808-757.¹

JONAH.—AMOS.

ASSYRIAN KINGS.

SAMSI-BIN B.C. 823-811. BINNIRARI, 810-872.

SHALMANESER III. 781-772. ASSUR-DAN-III, 771-754.

THE days of Israel's deepest depression, under Jehoahaz, had driven that king to seek help from Jehovah, the God of his fathers, and his reign had, in answer, been brightened by the promise of a great deliverer.² A gleam of sunshine had since then broken through the clouds, in the victories of Joash over the Syrians. But it was in his son and successor Jeroboam II., the great-grandson of Jehu—well named after the founder of the kingdom, that the prophecy received its complete fulfilment. Cultivating friendly relations with Judah, or at least safe from its attacks, holding as he still

¹ Schrader points out that these figures are uncertain, since Uzziah was certainly alive in B.C. 740. There was a total eclipse of the sun, visible at Jerusalem, in 784. It was at its full about 1 p.m. *Michaelis*, quoted by Hitzig, *Amos*, p. 130. Another also occurred in B.C. 803.

² 2 Kings xiii. 4, 5.

did the hostages given to his father by Amaziah, as pledges of its good behaviour;¹ he was free to turn his arms against the foreign enemies of his country. Little is told of his character or of his wars, but the extent of his conquests and the glory to which he raised his country, mark him as the greatest of all the kings who reigned in Samaria. It seemed indeed as if the times of David had come back.² The northern empire of Solomon was restored. From Hamath on the Orontes, to the wady of the Arabah,³ south of the Dead Sea, his sway was acknowledged. Moab and Ammon were reconquered and made tributary, under native princes. The Valley of the Willows, on the border of Edom, became the southern boundary of Israel.⁴ Ammon had long harassed the territory of the Eastern tribes which was not in the hands of the Syrians, and its ferocious cruelties had roused the wildest indignation. But to use the words of Amos, "fire was now kindled" in the wall of Rabbah, and its palaces burned down; the king and princes falling into the hands of the victors.⁵ Moab had in part recovered itself since the raising of the siege of Kir Haraseth, and not only refused to pay the tribute imposed by David, but, as has been noticed, sent bands of its troops, yearly, into the Israelite territory, burning and slaying all before them. The vigour of Jeroboam soon, however, tamed their boldness. An out-

¹ 2 Kings xiv. 14.

² It marks the uncertainty of the Old Testament chronology, that while the Authorized Version states that Jeroboam II. reigned 41 years (2 Kings xiv. 23), Graetz makes his reign 61 years, and Ewald 53. Schenkel adheres to the 41 years of the Hebrew text. Kleinert reckons it at 51 years.

³ 2 Kings xiv. 25. Amos vi. 14.

⁴ Isaiah xv. 7. Amos vi. 14.

⁵ Amos i. 13-15.

rage committed on a king of Edom, whose bones they burned to dust,¹ aided him, by rousing the Edomites to a fierce thirst for vengeance which made them his allies. Terrible recollections of the war passed down to future times. Wailing filled all the towns and cities of Moab, for neither stronghold, nor valley, nor upland escaped the spoiler. Flight to the wilderness was the only hope. Men hid themselves in the clefts and caves of the hills, like doves that nestle in the holes of the rocks.² Women, cast out of their cities, like birds from their nest, crouched together at the fords of the Arnon.³ Fire and sword desolated the land.⁴ The population was slain,



CLAY TABLET WITH INSCRIPTIONS, ASSYRIA.

scattered, or dragged away as slaves: the very vines, and cornfields, and pastures were destroyed.

Syria, the great hereditary enemy of Israel, already weakened by the Assyrian campaigns against Benhadad II., had been still more so by further troubles from the Euphrates, before the accession of Jeroboam; making

¹ Amos ii. 1. *Lit.*, lime. See p. 197.

² Jer. xlviii. 28.

³ Isa. xvi. 2.

⁴ In Isaiah xvi. 13, it is expressly said that the prophecy there given is quoted from an older prophet, very probably Jonah, who is mentioned in 2 Kings xiv. 25, as having roused Jeroboam to his great undertakings. Jeremiah applies it to his own time, chap. xlviii. Schenkel (art. *Jeroboam II.*, in *Bibel-Lex.*) thinks Isaiah chaps. xv. and xvi. are Jonah's. Cheyne thinks they are not Isaiah's but an older prophet's, though he does not mention Jonah.

it comparatively easy for Joash, his father, to resist it successfully. There is no mention, in the inscriptions, of Benhadad III., the son and successor of Hazael, but both Syria and Palestine trembled before Binnirari;¹ the second Assyrian king after Shalmaneser II. In the reign of Joash he had invaded "the sea coast," and after taking Damascus, had reduced its king Mariha,—“the lord”—to vassalage. “I marched” says he, “against the country of the Khatti (Hittites) and took Mariha, their king, in the town of Damascus, his capital. Profound fear of Assur, my lord, seized him. He embraced my knees and made submission. I imposed on him a tribute of 2,300 talents of silver, 10 talents of gold, 3,000 talents of copper, 4,000 talents of iron, and of a buantity of woollen and cotton cloths and fabrics. I took the standard and the royal umbrella² and the vast wealth of his treasures—all, in fact, that was in Damascus—both in the city itself and in the palace.” He boasts, moreover, of having laid under tribute and re-united to his empire, Phenicia, including both Tyre and Sidon—the land of Omri—that is, the kingdom of Israel,—the land of Edom, and the land of Palestine,³ to the Western Ocean.⁴

The reign of Jeroboam is marked by the fragment of

¹ Samsi Bin was the immediate successor of Shalmaneser II. He reigned from 823 to 811, but was crippled by a rebellion of his brother. When this was quelled, however, he undertook campaigns to the north, east and south, and last of all to the west. But he did not exert any great influence on the western nations. Binnirari reigned from 810 to 782.

² Seen over the head of the kings of Assyria in the sculptures.

³ This is the first time the word Palestine occurs in the Assyrian inscriptions. It means, apparently, the country of the Philistines.

⁴ Menant, p. 127. *Keilinschriften*, p. 113.

sacred literature known as the Book of Jonah¹ which throws a striking light on the greatness of Assyria, when the prophet went on his mission to it. That he should have been sent on such an errand of mercy to a great heathen city, is specially interesting as the first prominent expression of the Divine love to all mankind, found in the Old Testament. The very harshness and exclusive narrowness of the prophet himself, heightens the charm of the narrative. God has pity on the great city, although idolatrous, but Jonah is unwilling to carry a message of love outside his own nation. His very conceptions of the Almighty, show the imperfect ideas of his time. He thinks to escape from Him by leaving Palestine for a region beyond the sea. And even when forced on his journey, his Jewish bigotry shows itself in his anger that a heathen population should have averted its threatened doom by a timely repentance.

A notice in the Book of Kings,² throws an incidental light on the life of the prophet. He must have been prominent among his order in these stormy times, for we find him the counsellor of Jeroboam in a policy

¹ The Book of Jonah may not have been actually written by the prophet himself, who was a contemporary of Jeroboam II. Bleek supposes that from Nineveh being mentioned in chap. iii. 3, apparently as a city of the past, the composition could not have been before B.C. 626-606. *Einleitung*, vol. ii. p. 116. Kleinert thinks its Hebrew indicates that it was written in the period of Ezekiel's ministry. *Jonah*, p. 19. Dr. Gustav Baur, in *Biehm*, fancies its language shows it to date from the Captivity. Nuegelsbach, in *Hertzog*, gives no opinion respecting its date, contenting himself with saying that expositions variously assign it to different periods between B.C. 771 and the time of the Maccabees. It need hardly be added that this scholar is intensely evangelical. But the actual date at which "Jonah" was written for insertion in the Canon has nothing to do with its inspiration.

² 2 Kings xiv. 25.

of vigour against Syria. Enthusiastically patriotic, the depression of Israel weighed on his heart. But he did not despair of his country even in its darkest hour. It was under the protection of Jehovah and must rise again, if it repented and returned to its invisible King. With keen insight into the capacity of the new ruler in Samaria, he recognized him as the deliverer promised by God to save His chosen people, and animated him to take the field against the long dreaded enemy, by the inspired assurance that he would be victorious, and would even extend the narrow limits of Israel wellnigh to the grandeur of David's empire; from Hamath in the northern valley of Lebanon, on the Orontes, to the south of the Dead Sea.¹

Intense sympathy with his race, who had suffered so much from Damascus and Assyria, doubtless lay at the root of the prophet's aversion to the mission on behalf of Nineveh, divinely intrusted to him. In his eyes the heathen were only to be trampled under foot as the enemies of Jehovah. A day of God such as Joel had lately predicted, when they would be trodden like grapes in the winepress of the wrath of the Almighty, was their just doom. Another century was needed before Micah and Isaiah could realize that they were hereafter to turn to Jehovah and go up to the mountain of His House from every land.²

Hurrying down from the hills of Galilee to Joppa, the one port of Israel, to flee as far west as possible, rather

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. x. 1. Gath-hepher where Jonah was born, is now the village of Meshed, "the monument," so called from the supposed tomb of the prophet. It is in the ancient territory of Zebulon. The Jewish tradition, that Jonah was the son of the widow of Sarepta, has no historical basis.

² Mic. iv. 1. Isa. ii. 2. Ezek. xvii. 22, 23.

than go on an errand of mercy to the abhorred oppressor of his nation, we see the prophet eagerly taking his passage in a Tyrian Tarshish-ship lying in the harbour. The narrative that follows has an antique simplicity in every line. Weary with excitement and travel, he sinks into deep sleep as the vessel weighs anchor. But a sudden storm, so common in the Levant, breaks on the voyagers when only a little way out. The rowers do their best, but are speedily helpless. Part of the cargo is thrown overboard, to guard against foundering, but the waves trample over the decks and seem to claim the ship as their prey. All hope is lost if the heavens do not aid. In their despair, each sailor implores the succour of his own god. Still the ship rolls and welters in the storm. At last, by his own request, the prophet, conscience stricken, is cast into the sea as an offering to appease the Divine wrath, and the storm abates.

Explanations of the wonderful deliverance that followed have often been vouchsafed. That there are sea-beasts who can swallow a man entire is beyond a doubt. The white shark, which sometimes measures 30 feet long, is quite able to do so. Captain King, in his "Survey of Australia," says that he caught one which could have swallowed a man with the greatest ease. Blumenbach even states that a whole horse has been found in this kind of shark, and Basil Hall tells us that he discovered in one, besides other things, the whole skin of a buffalo, which had been thrown overboard a short time before. Ruysch says that the whole body of a man in armour has been taken from the stomach of such a shark. It is not uncommon in the Mediterranean, and is met with also in the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. It is affirmed by naturalists that sharks have the power of throwing up again, whole and alive, the prey they have

seized. "I have heard," says Mr. Darwin, "from Dr. Allen of Forres, that he has frequently seen a *Diodon*¹ floating alive and distended in the stomach of a shark; and that on several occasions he has known it cut its way out, not only through the coats of the stomach, but through the sides of the monster, which has been thus killed." But all this does not account for the facts related of Jonah. It is, in fact, impossible to explain them by merely natural means. Yet his preservation was certainly not more miraculous than that of Shadrach and his companions in the "burning fiery furnace."²

Shalmaneser II. had died in the year 824, and was succeeded by his son Samsi-bin, after a civil war of seven years with one of his brothers. Though energetic and devoted to war, he had to contend with so many revolts of his eastern and northern provinces, that there is no trace on the few inscriptions he has left, of his having troubled the Jews, on the far west of his empire.³ Dying after a reign of thirteen years, he was followed by king Binnirari, who filled each season with a fresh campaign, in many cases, however, against revolted provinces. Internal troubles had, in fact, been rife ever since the reign of Shalmaneser II., and were destined to grow steadily more serious, till they came to a head, some time later, in a wide rebellion which shook the empire to its

¹ Couch's *History of Fishes*, vol. i. p. 33.

² *Diodon*—the "globe fish," so called from its power of distending its stomach into a great globe. It is also called the porcupine fish, from the spines with which it is covered. Its jaws are like the beak of a parrot, and are provided with a hard tooth-like edge to crush shells, etc. The sun fish belongs to this family.

³ See art. *Whale*, *Dict. of the Bible*. Dr. Pusey gives a great deal of information on this subject. *Minor Prophets*, pp. 257-9.

⁴ *Menant*, vol. i. p. 25.

foundations. Yet Binnirari was able to invade Elam and Chaldæa more than once, and to threaten the Medes. In the west, moreover, as we have seen, he crushed Damascus, and forced Phenicia, Edom, the king-dom of Israel, and "Palestine," or Philistia, to continue the tribute they had agreed to pay Shalmaneser II. After twenty-nine years of glory and trouble, however, he passed away in the year 782 B.C.,¹ and from that time till the accession of Tiglath-pileser IV., the Pul of the Scriptures, in B.C. 745, Assyria was little more than a wide sea of revolt.

It was some time during this long period of internal disquiet, perhaps towards its later years, when weakness in the throne was leading to a culmination of disturbance, that a strange figure, from the distant land of Omri,—his hair hanging long over his shoulders, his outer dress a rude sheep-skin mantle,²—appeared in Nineveh, startling every lane and square, bazaar and caravanserai, by a piercing³ monotonous wail, in the dialect of Israel, which though intelligible on the Tigris in such a brief sentence, must have seemed barbarous and uncouth. No one could tell who he was, or whence he came, but his bearing, appearance and words proclaimed him a "holy man," speaking for the

¹ Shalmaneser III. succeeded Binnirari in 781; and he himself was followed by Assur-dan-ili in 771. That prince died apparently about 754, and was succeeded by Assur-nirar, who reigned till B.C. 746. Tiglath-pileser IV. followed in 745; but the whole empire had been in a flame of insurrection for years before. Each country, indeed, was struggling for its old independence. 2 Kings xv. 19, etc. This is very strikingly shown by Schrader. *Keilinschriften*, p. 124 ff. Art. *Phul*, in *Reichm.*

² I assume that Jonah was in appearance like Elijah, or one of the old school of prophets. 2 Kings i. 8. Zech. xiii. 4.

³ Jonah iii. 3. Hebrew.

gods. The effect must have been much the same as when Joshua the son of Ananus, at the siege of Jerusalem under Titus, passed through the streets of the doomed city, raising an awful burden against it. "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, a voice against this whole people. Woe be to Jerusalem!"¹ Day after day, fresh crowds saw Jonah passing slowly along, ever and anon raising his weird cry that Nineveh would perish within six weeks. Over the vast space included in the aggregate of cities of which it was composed—from Kuyunjik and Khorsabad on the north, to Calah Keremlis on the south, nothing was heard but discourse about the strange apparition seen daily in the streets, and the awful words he uttered. Had he come when the empire was prosperous, he might have been treated with mocking laughter, even by a people so superstitious. But suddenly appearing when rebellion was chronic in many provinces; when conquest had given way to defence, and the loss of a battle might bring to their gates nations infuriated with long oppression—the words and the man alike struck them with terror.

No capital needed repentance more than Nineveh. Luxury and indulgence prevailed. The wealth torn from vast regions filled its palaces. Its pride and cruelty had become proverbial. Even its religion was embodied impurity. The prophet's cry for once smote its conscience. The alarm soon spread from the streets to the palace. Trembling attendants told the news to the great king as he sat in his sculptured audience chamber amidst his magnificent court. It came like a voice from the higher world and filled him with dismay. He, like

¹ Jos., *Bell.*, V. v. 3.

his people, was guilty. Repentance alone could save them or him. Rising from the throne, he laid aside his gorgeous robes, and putting on coarse sackcloth, threw ashes on his head, in token of profound humiliation and sorrow. Nor was even this enough. Summoning his nobles, he decreed that a solemn fast should be kept, in which neither man nor beast should eat or drink. The people must put on sackcloth, and even the beasts be wrapped in it.¹ All men were to "cry mightily to God, and turn from their evil way and from the violence that was in their hands."²

The lessons taught by the concluding portion of the Book form an era in the development of true religious feeling. A city as intensely abhorred by the Jews as Carthage was by Rome, or France, under the elder Napoleon, by Germany, had been pardoned by God as the result of the evangelical mission of one of their race. It could no longer be claimed that Jehovah was exclusively their God. The bitter narrowness of later Judaism was anticipated and condemned. The universal brotherhood of man taught by our Lord was foreshadowed. That a Jew, moreover, should thus have involuntarily brought mercy to the enemies of his nation, enforced the true conception of that boundless sympathy of man with man, which makes the Good Samaritan a type of the spirit of Christianity. The withering of the prophet's gourd, with the regrets it excited, strikes home in all ages, as it must have done in Jonah's day, the contrast

¹ *Herodotus*, ix. 24, tells us that in the mourning for Masistius, a little before the battle of Plataea, the Persian troops not only shaved off their own hair, but shaved also their horses and beasts of burden. It is a relic of the feeling which marked Nineveh, that in our stately funerals the horses wear trappings of black cloth.

² *Jonah* iii. 7, 8.

between the infinite love of heaven and the selfish coldness of man. The growth of a night¹ can be pitied when it touches ourselves; but unspeakably higher claims too often awaken no tenderness where we are not personally concerned.

While Damascus, on the east of the northern kingdom, had been weakened by the attacks of Assyria when Jeroboam II. began his reign, Phenicia, on the west, had suffered from internal feuds. Civil wars, which in the end led to the flight of Elissa, or Dido, to Africa, where she founded Carthage in B.C. 812,² had broken the power of Tyre, now, like Samaria, a tributary of Assyria, and secured Israel from its co-operation with her enemies. The circumstances of her neighbour thus favoured her recovery of political importance under so vigorous and able a ruler. Nor were matters less propitious in the south. Uzziah, now king of Judah, while avoiding such dangerous relations with Jeroboam as those of his predecessors with the house of Omri, lived at peace with one so able and powerful. The citizens of the northern kingdom had free intercourse with those of the southern. Pilgrimages to the ancient sanctuary at Beersheba, where calf worship like that at Dan and Bethel seems to have been practised, came into fashion,³ and, in all probability,

¹ The palma christi, or castor oil plant. *Bleek. Pusey. Robinson* (vol. i. p. 559), says it still grows to a large size in the Jordan valley. Its growth is wonderfully rapid in any case, though here it was miraculous. It rises to the height of an olive tree. "On warm days, when a small rain falls, black caterpillars are generated in great numbers on this plant, which, in one night, so often and so suddenly cut off its leaves, that only their bare ribs remain." Quotation in *Pusey*. The caterpillar in the Assyrian *Ricinus* may be different, but the illustration of rapid destruction is striking.

² *Mövers*, vol. ii. pt. i. 362, pt. ii. 150. ³ Amos v. 5; viii. 14.

a few faithful souls from time to time attended the temple services at Jerusalem. Jehovah had at last given "Israel a Saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians;" and they were now able, after many distracted and wretched years, "to dwell peaceably in their homes, as beforetime."¹

Under the reign of Jeroboam II., the material prosperity of his noble kingdom rose to a height it had never previously known. Samaria grew rich from the booty of the wars and the profits of commerce and trade. Mansions of hewn stone rose on every side; the inner walls, in many cases, in imitation of Ahab's palace, covered with plates of ivory brought from Africa by the Phenicians;² and the chambers fitted up with couches and furniture of the same rare material.³ Cool houses for the hot season; others, warmer, for winter, became a fashion.⁴ Pleasant vineyards attached to them covered the slopes of the hills.⁵ It was the Indian or St. Martin's summer of the northern kingdom. But as the wealth of the few accumulated, the mass of the population had grown poorer. The apparent prosperity was only a phosphorescence on decay. Intercourse with the heathen communities round; the loose morality of armies dissolved after victorious campaigns, and dispersed to their homes; the unscrupulous self-indulgence and magnificence of the rich, prompting equally unworthy means to indulge it; and the widening gulf between the upper and lower classes, were ruining the country. Above all, the old religiousness of Israel was well-nigh gone. The ox worship of Bethel and Dan had been gradually developed into a gross idolatry; Samaria and Gilgal had

¹ 2 Kings xiii. 5.

² *Ibid.* vi. 4.

³ *Ibid.* v. 11.

⁴ Amos iii. 15.

⁵ *Ibid.* iii. 15.

raised calf images of their own, for local worship.¹ The great temple at Bethel, at which the king worshipped, and near which he had a palace,² boasted of a high priest, with a numerous staff, richly endowed; not poor, like the priests of Judea.³ The whole country was filled with altars,⁴ abused by superstition. As time went on, even the darker idolatries of Phenicia, which Jehu, the founder of the dynasty, had so fiercely put down, rose again everywhere. A temple to Asherah had remained from his day in Samaria, and was now re-opened.⁵ The women once more burned incense before her, as their favourite goddess, and decked themselves with their ear-rings and jewels on her feast days.⁶ Silver and gold images of Baal were set up.⁷ The smoke of sacrifices to idols rose on the tops of the mountains, and incense was burned to them on the hills, under the shade of sacred groves. The obscenities of heathenism once more polluted the land. Maidens and matrons consorted with temple harlots, and played the wanton in the name of religion.⁸ "Gilead was given to idolatry: they sacrificed to bullocks in Gilgal;" they "transgressed at Bethel and multiplied transgression at Gilgal."⁹

The country was, in fact, spoiled by prosperity, which no healthy public morality any longer controlled or directed. Society from the highest to the lowest had become corrupt. Drunkenness and debauchery spread. Wine had taken away their understanding.¹⁰ The birth-

¹ Amos iv. 4; v. 5; vii. 13; viii. 14. Hosea viii. 5; x. 5; xii. 11.

² Amos vii. 13. ³ *Ibid.* vii. 10, 17. ⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 8.

⁵ 2 Kings xiii. 6. ⁶ Hosea ii. 13.

⁷ Hosea ii. 8: for "prepared for," read "made into." *Ewald.*
Hitzig. Pusey.

⁸ Hosea iv. 13-15.

⁹ *Ibid.* ix. 15; xii. 11. Amos iv. 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* iv. 11: for "heart," read "understanding."

day festival of the king saw the most revolting excesses.¹ "The drunkards of Ephraim" became a phrase even in Jerusalem.² The very "priest and the prophet" reeled with strong drink at their ministrations.³ The judge on the bench, and the military officers, covered with medals, were equally bacchanalian. Guests at feasts drank till the scene was repulsive.⁴ Even the women were given to their cups.⁵ The great ladies of Samaria—fair and well fed as the kine of Bashan—are described as greedy for drink. Such sensuality and profuseness led to all other vices. The passion for money became general. Corrupt judges, for a bribe, handed over honest men to slavery, as debtors, for so small a default⁶ as the price of a pair of shoes. The usurer, after bringing a man to poverty, seemed to grudge him the dust he had put on his head as mourning. Instead of restoring to the poor in the evening, as the law required,⁷ the upper garment they had taken in pledge,—his sleeping-robe,—men spread it, as their own, over the couch on which they lay down to nightly carousals, held in the house of their gods,—where they feasted on the flesh of their sacrifices, washed down with wine robbed from the helpless.⁸ Tumults, from such oppression, filled the streets of Samaria.⁹ The mansions of the great were stored with the plunder of their poorer neighbours. Their owners lay, garlanded

¹ Hosea vii. 5: for "him," read "themselves"; for "skins," read "heat." Gesenius. See margin, and the word "hamah" in the *Englishman's Heb. Concord.*

² Isaiah xxviii. 1.

³ Isaiah xxviii. 7. *Cheyne.*

⁴ Isaiah xxviii. 6, 7.

⁵ Amos iv. 1. *Hitzig.*

⁶ Amos ii. 6. *Hitzig. Schmoller.* Amos v. 12.

⁷ Exod. xxii. 25, 26.

⁸ Amos ii. 8. *Hitzig.*

⁹ Amos iii. 9.

and anointed, on couches of ivory. Their banquets were splendid. Rich music filled their halls as they feasted. Nor would the wine tempered with water—the drink of their fathers—content them. They drew it pure from the huge vessels in which their predecessors had mingled their modest refreshment.¹ The husbandman had to make them oppressive gifts of his wheat.² The great landowners used false measures and false weights in selling their corn, and claimed full price for even the refuse grain.³ Men had to pledge their clothes and their freedom for food.⁴

Such was the state of things even in the earlier years of Jeroboam II.; but matters grew worse towards its close, and in the years that followed his death. No truth, or mercy, or knowledge of God, we



DRINKING SCENE, KHORSABAD.

are told, was left in the land. Swearing, lying, homicide, stealing, committing adultery, housebreaking, and murder, till blood touched blood, ran riot.⁵ No road was safe. Bands of robbers infested the thoroughfares. Life was no longer sacred. Even the people at court and the priests were deeply compromised in the worst crimes.⁶

While Jeroboam lived, his strong hand may have some-

¹ Amos vi. 4-6. David is here mentioned as the inventor of musical instruments. See p. 47.

² Amos v. 11. ³ Amos viii. 5, 6. ⁴ Amos ii. 6-8; viii. 4-6.

⁵ Hosea iv. 1, 2.

⁶ Hosea v. 1, 2; vi. 9

what checked this anarchy, but at his death society was well-nigh dissolved. A few were immensely rich, but the mass of the people were in dread of slavery for the cost of an existence which had become a burden. Any revolution or disturbance that promised to change matters was sure of support. A hideous Jacquerie, or peasant wars, or risings, like those of Germany or England, might at any moment be expected. To make things still worse, the monarchy, rejecting all control by the prophets, threw off the last check to its lawlessness, and was ready to maintain itself by any violence, however extreme. Around it were seen only an army absolutely at its bidding, corrupt judges, haughty nobles, and men grown rich by unjust gains. Israel had sunk into a mere military despotism in which might was right. Revolution became chronic. Before the fall of the kingdom, no fewer than three kings reigned in a single month.¹

But the final ruin of the State was not suffered to approach, without an earnest struggle to prevent it on the part of all that was best and truest in the national life. Amidst overmastering evil there was still some good; nor were thoughtful intelligence and a measure of culture wanting, in a community which could appreciate the elevation of style and copiousness of illustration and allusion, found in the popular addresses of the prophets.

As the reign of Jehoash of Judah had been marked by the appearance of the prophet Joel,² that of Jeroboam II. was signalised by the public ministry of Amos³ and Hosea.⁴ The social position, and even the tribe of the latter are unknown, but the lowly origin of the former illustrates one of the greatest glories of Israel—that all

¹ 2 Kings xv. 10-14. ² —Jehovah is God.

³ —The porter. Klein, in *Richm.* ⁴ —Joshua.

its sons were essentially equal in the great spiritual commonwealth of the nation; the humblest no less than the highest being chosen indifferently by God for His special service as prophets. At one season he tended flocks on the pastures of Tekoa,¹ an upland village a few miles south of Bethlehem, in Judea; in the autumn he earned a poor living by cutting the sycamore figs which grew in the valley; a common fruit, which needed to be opened to get rid of its acrid juice, and make it edible. He was simply a labouring peasant. That he was not uncultivated, however, is shown by his literary remains, which silently witness to the efficient education of even the poorest classes in Israel in his day. But he had had no advantages of any professional training; he was neither a prophet nor a "son" of the prophets.²

He seems to have made his first public appearance after Jeroboam had crushed Moab and finished his conquests;³ while Uzziah, who came to the throne fifteen years after Jeroboam's accession, was reigning in Jerusalem.⁴ It was, further, two years before the great earthquake which happened in that king's reign.⁵ The prophetic impulse, he tells us, seized him as he was following the flock, and impelled him⁶ to go forthwith

¹ The name Tekoa comes from Taka—to strike; an allusion in this case to driving the tent-pins into the ground. The village was, hence, in all probability, only a group of tents used by the shepherds of the district.

² Amos i. 1; vii. 14, 15.

³ Amos vi. 14. ² Kings xiv. 25.

⁴ Amos i. 1.

⁵ Bosanquet (*Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. iii. p. 2) fixes the date of this earthquake at B.C. 762. He proposes to lower the received chronology of the Jewish kings 25 years to make it fit into the Assyrian chronology, which is established by no fewer than five separate sources. This would make the first appearance of Amos to have taken place nineteen years before Jeroboam's death.

⁶ Amos vii. 15.

to Bethel, the religious centre of the northern kingdom. True to the associations of his simple calling, his imagery befits a peasant. Threshing instruments; the harvest cart pressed with sheaves; the lion and the bear; the bird taken in the gin; the shepherd fighting with wild beasts in defence of his flock; the shining of the constellations, as seen when watching in the fields by night; the peculiarities of the Negeb; the incidents of rural life—the sifting of corn, the basket of summer fruit, the mowing of the hayfields, the labours of the ploughman, the sower and the reaper, supply his illustrations.¹

Urged by the Spirit of God to his adventurous journey, he at once obeyed. Boldly mingling with the crowds at the national sanctuary, he denounced the corruption and crimes of the great, and foretold their certain results. Nor did he hesitate to charge Jeroboam himself with special guilt in sanctioning the religious corruption of the day. Fearless even under the shadow of the palace, he proclaimed the approaching fall of the dynasty for its unfaithfulness to Jehovah. God would rise against it with the sword. He was equally unmoved by the fear of the multitude. Israel would surely be led away captive from their own land.² Simple peasant, as he was, in his rude peasant's dress he braved king and people. Men must have recalled the bearing of Elijah and Micajah the son of Imlah, to Ahab.³ Awed by his splendid audacity, they could not refuse him a hearing.

The addresses in which he embodied his message are wonderful as the utterances of one in such a position in life. They unite the flow and clearness of prose with the rhythm and harmony of poetry. Nor is their skill

¹ Amos i. 3; ii. 13; iii. 4, 5; iv. 2, 7, 9; v. 8, 19; vi. 12; vii. 1; ix. 3, 9, 13, 14.

² Amos vii. 9-11.

³ 1 Kings xxii. 18 ff.

less marked. Coming from Judah, he disarmed the jealousy of his audience in his opening sentences, by denouncing the enemies of Israel,—Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, Moab, and Ammon, and arraigning even Judah itself,¹ before he approached his complaints against Israel. He begins thus:

"Jehovah will thunder² out of Zion; He will utter His voice from Jerusalem, and the whole land will tremble. As the blood freezes in the veins with fear, so shall the grass shrivel on the pastures of the shepherds of the south, at the sound, and the trees wither on the crest of Carmel!"³

"Thus saith Jehovah! Because Damascus has three times offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They have threshed Gilead with threshing rollers with iron teeth.⁴ For this I will send fire into the house of Hazael, and it will consume the palaces of Benhadad.⁵ I will also break through the bars of the gates of Damascus, and root out the inhabitants from the Valley of the Sun,⁶ and him that holds the sceptre⁷ from the paradise round his halls.⁸ And the people of Syria shall be led captive by the Assyrians, when Damascus is taken, to the river Kir in the far north,⁹ whence they originally came,¹⁰ saith Jehovah!

"Thus saith Jehovah! Because Gaza has three times offended,

¹ Amos i. 1-15; ii. 1-5.

² Lit. "roar," as the warrior when he rushes to the fight. The text is amplified, to make it clear.

³ *Hitzig*. 2 Kings x. 32; xiii. 7. Prov. xx. 26.

⁴ Hazael lived in the palaces of Benhadad whom he had murdered. Jer. xlix. 27.

⁵ Ewald and Hitzig think the allusion here is to Baalbek—the "On" or "Sun" city.

⁶ Vassal kings from the days of Ahab. 1 Kings xx. 25.

⁷ Lit. from Beth Eden. De Wette assumes that it means a place.

⁸ On Kiepert's *Map*, Kir is between the Black and the Caspian seas. But this identification is questioned. See Herzog, *R. E.*, 2nd ed., vol. i. p. 602. Some place it in South Mesopotamia.

⁹ Amos ix. 7. See 2 Kings xvi. 9.

aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They led away whole villages captive and sold them to the Edomites, their bitterest enemies, as slaves.¹ For this I will send fire on the walls of Gaza and it will consume the palaces of the city. And I will root out the inhabitants from Ashdod, and the sceptre-bearer from Askelon; and turn My hand against Ekron; and the still surviving remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord Jehovah.²

"Thus saith Jehovah! Because Tyre has three times offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They bought whole villages of captives from the Philistine forayers and sold them to Edom as slaves; though they knew the friendly relations long existing between Judah and Tyre, and that Edom and Judah were brothers. For this I will send fire on the walls of Tyre which will consume the palaces of the city!

"Thus saith Jehovah! Because Edom has three times offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. He pursued his brother with the sword, stifling all pity, and his rage tore at them continually, and he kept up his bitterness for ever.³ For this I will send fire on Teman⁴ which will consume the palaces of Bozrah.⁵

"Thus saith Jehovah! Because the sons of Ammon have thrice offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from them. They ripped up the women of Gilead who were with child, in their wars to enlarge their territory.⁶ For this I

¹ Joel iv. 1-6. Too weak for open war, the Philistines carried off whole villages in sudden forays, and took them to Gaza, whence they were sent by caravans to Petra.

² The literal fulfilment of this prophecy is seen in the very sites of most of the Philistine cities being still doubtful or unknown.

³ Joel iii. 19.

⁴ The southern part of Edom. *Hieron.*, on Amos i. 12. Also a town about 5 miles south of Petra.

⁵ A chief town of Edom—apparently the present Busseirah—"little Bozrah," in contrast to Bozrah in the Hauran)—about 30 miles slightly south-east of the lower end of the Dead Sea. *Kiepert's Map*, and *Kneucker in Schenkel*.

⁶ Arnheim, Sachs, and Zuns read—"They burst through the

will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah,¹ and it will consume the palaces of the city, amidst shouting in the day of battle; in the wild whirlwind and storm of assault.² Then shall their king go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith Jehovah!

"Thus saith Jehovah!³ Because Moab has thrice offended, aye, four times,⁴ I will not hold back my wrath from it. He burned the bones of the king of Edom to dust—to scatter them in the air or strew them on the waters, and thus rob the dead of the repose of the grave.⁵ For this I will send fire on Moab and it will consume the palaces of Kiriath,⁶ and Moab shall perish amid tumult, and the cry of battle, and the blast of trumpets. And I will destroy the ruler⁷ from its midst and slay all his princes with him, saith Jehovah."

Having won the ears of his northern audience by this denunciation of their enemies, the prophet dexterously passes to the guilt of Judah, before wounding the self-love of Israel by similar reproaches.

"Thus saith Jehovah! Because Judah has thrice offended,

mountains of Gilead." But see 2 Kings viii. 12. Hosea xiv. 1. The Ammonites seem to have renewed border wars like those of Judges xi. 4. The Assyrian was, in return, to destroy them.

¹ Rabbah—"The Great" city, or "the Capital." The sarcophagus (translated "bed" in our version) of Og, the gigantic king of Bashan, was preserved here. Rabbah was taken by Joab for David, but evidently did not continue long in Jewish hands, as it is here in those of the Ammonites again. See also Jer. xlix. 1. Ezek. xxv. 4, 5. The name was changed by Ptolemy II. (Philadelphus) of Egypt, to Philadelphia, on his rebuilding the city.

² Isa. xxvii. 8; xxviii. 2. ³ Joel ii.

⁴ De Wette has "many times" wherever "four" occurs.

⁵ Josh. vii. 25. Never done but to the vilest criminals. Isa. lxvi. 24.

⁶ "Kiriath" is translated in Jer. xlviii. 41, by Ewald, Graf, and Keil, "the cities." Dietrich, in Merx, *Archiv.*, vol. i. p. 320, thinks it refers here to Ar Moab, as the capital.

⁷ Lit. "Judge." They had, as vassals of Jeroboam II., no king, but only a "judge" or "shopet."

aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They have despised¹ the law of Jehovah and have not kept His statutes, and their idols, which are but lies, have led them astray—the idols after which they walked; for this I will send fire upon Judah and it will consume the palaces of Jerusalem!”

Now, at last, he comes to the guilt of Israel and the judgments it will surely bring down.

“Thus saith Jehovah!² Because Israel has thrice offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. The usurious and lawless rich sell as a slave the upright debtor, for money; the honest poor man for a debt of the value of a pair of sandals.³ They grudge⁴ the helpless even the dust they have cast on their heads in their grief, and take away the living of the wretched.⁵ Still worse; the son and the father go to the same harlot; thus profaning My Holy Name.⁶ They lay themselves down on their couches at their carousals, by every altar,⁷ on clothes given in pledge for loans, though the law requires that they be given back before sundown.⁸ They drink the wine extorted by unjust fines, in the house of their god—for their drinking feasts are held in their temples.”

¹ Zunz, *Bibel*, “rejected.”

² Amos ii. 6.

³ See *Dict. of the Bible*, art. *Sandals*. The law authorized the sale of a thief who could not repay what he stole, but it gave no power to sell a debtor unable to pay. Yet the practice of doing so gradually became common. The sons and daughters of a debtor, or his wife and children, or even the sons of a debtor who had died, were illegally sold to repay debt—in some cases, if of no higher amount than the value of a pair of sandals. See p. 120.

⁴ Lit. “pant after.”

⁵ Lit. “they drive them out of the beaten road, into one in which they cannot walk.”

⁶ Num. xx. 11; xxii. 32. Jer. xxxiv. 16.

⁷ Those of Bethel, for example; chap. iii. 14.

⁸ Exod. xxii. 25, 26.

That a people so favoured by Jehovah as Israel had been in the past should thus outrage His laws, excites the wonder of the prophet.

"If they would only remember, however—I destroyed the mighty Amorites before them. They were tall as cedars and strong as oaks; yet I destroyed them utterly, root and branch. I brought you up, also, from the land of Egypt, and led you through the wilderness for forty years,¹ that you might possess the country of the Amorite. Then, when I had given it you, I raised up prophets from among your sons, and Nazarites from among your young men, to teach you and keep you in my law. Is it not thus, ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah. But how have you received them in these days? Ye have made the Nazarites drunk with wine and have commanded the prophets not to prophesy. Ye are a heavy burden to Me, saith Jehovah. But I will make your State totter beneath you as a wagon totters when overlaid with sheaves.² I shall surely visit you in wrath, and, in that day, the swift of foot shall fail to gain a place of refuge; the strong man, paralysed by fear, shall not be able to put forth his strength; the brave warrior shall not save his life; he that handles the bow shall not stand; the swift of foot shall not escape. Even the horseman shall not save his life, and the bravest among the brave will flee, throwing away his arms to deliver himself, in that day, saith Jehovah!"³

It was painful to speak thus against his brethren, for the prophet, like a true patriot, yearned over those whom

¹ Amos shows that he knew the story of the Exodus, and thus was familiar with the five "Books of Moses." See Exod. xvi. 35. Num. xiv. 33, 34; xxxii. 13. Deut. ii. 7; viii. 2; ix. 29. He knew also the law about returning at night the robe pledged through the day. But how could this have been, if the modern theory of the late origin of the Pentateuch be right?

² The Authorized Version and Hitzig render it, "I am pressed down under you," etc., but the translation I have adopted is that of Ewald, Schmeller, Zunz, De Wette, and Noyes.

³ How fearfully was this fulfilled when Samaria was taken and Israel crushed by Assyria!

he was compelled to wound and condemn. He therefore justifies his language by illustrations used in the name of Jehovah Himself. Since God has so greatly honoured Israel in the past, He has a right to their loyalty. Nor can such relations continue if this loyalty fail.

"Hear this word¹ which Jehovah has spoken against you, O children of Israel—against the whole race that I brought up from the land of Egypt! You only, says He, have I fondly known² of all the races of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities, for the very love I bear you! Two cannot walk together unless they agree.³ If Israel disobey God, He must leave them. Nor are these mere empty words. If He threaten, He will act upon His threat! The lion roars only when it sees its prey. The young lion in its den roars only when it has carried its prey thither. The snare must be set before the bird is caught, but when set is not taken up from the ground if nothing be in it. Such threats, therefore, as God has uttered through His prophet, are sent to alarm, like the peal of a war trumpet in a town, or like a city tumult permitted of Jehovah as a punishment, by the strife it raises. The prophets, God's servants, are the appointed revealers of His will to man, and assuredly He would do nothing to Israel without disclosing it to them. This, therefore, is the warrant for their claiming respect for their message. The roar of the lion fills the soul with terror; let all then tremble before the voice of God. Nor can the prophet withhold his burden; for when the Lord God has commanded him to speak, what can he do but utter the words put in his mouth."

Having thus vindicated his divine commission, Amos throws off all reserve and proclaims the approaching

¹ Amos iii.

² This expression is equivalent here to "chosen" and "loved." See *De Wette. Schmoller. Hitzig.*

³ Zunz renders this, "Can two walk kindly together without having coming to an understanding?" So, in effect, most others.

judgments on Israel for its sins. The word given him from Jehovah is this—

"Cry out, O prophet, to the palaces of Ashdod, and to the palaces of the land of Egypt, and invite them, as neighbouring kingdoms, to assemble on the mountains of Samaria¹ and witness the tumults and anarchy in the midst of the city; the oppression in its bosom. It may well fill even heathen peoples with wonder. For they neither know nor care to do what is right, saith Jehovah. They heap up the fruits of violence and robbery in their palaces.

"Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah! An enemy shall surround the land and cut off escape, and he will throw down thy boasted splendour and strength, O Samaria, and plunder thy palaces. Thus saith Jehovah! As the shepherd snatches from the jaws of the lion attacking his flock, two small bones of the leg, or a piece of an ear, so shall those sons of Israel who loll in the corners of their divans, and stretch themselves on the damask of their couches, be snatched away as captives, from amidst the slain!

"Still further, says the Lord Jehovah, the God of Hosts! Hear ye this, O Amos, and testify it to the House of Jacob. On the day when I visit the sins of Israel on him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel—the national sanctuary—and the horns of the great altar shall fall to the ground, broken off; and I will overthrow the winter houses of the rich and ungodly oppressors, and also their houses for summer; and the houses of ivory² shall be destroyed, and the great mansions will vanish, saith Jehovah."

Nor shall the women of Samaria escape, for they are no less guilty than their lords.

"Hear this word,³ ye sleek and well fed cows of Bashan—ye haughty dames—on the hill of Samaria; who, like your husbands, oppress the poor, and tread down the helpless; who say to your lords, Bring us wine that we may drink! The Lord

¹ Spectators on the hills round Samaria could see into the city, which was on a lower hill. *Amos iii. 9. See p. 40.

² See p. 46.

³ Amos iv.

Jehovah has sworn by His holiness—Behold, days come to you when you will be dragged from your fair homes by the rude soldiers who have taken the city, as fish are dragged out with the hook, and your children as with fish hooks. And ye shall go out, not by the gates, but by the breaches made by the foe in the city walls, every one by that which is nearest, and will be carried away to the mountains of Armenia.¹ So says Jehovah!

Passing now from denunciation, the prophet assails his hearers with the lighter weapons of irony.

"But you will be very religious will you, and thus avert your doom! Yet what is your religion? Go, then, to Bethel, and sin against God in doing so; to Gilgal, and add to your guilt. Bring your offerings every morning to your unholy altars; a portion of your tithes, not thrice a year at the great festivals of the law, as required, but twice a week.² Burn leavened bread as a thank offering, not unleavened, as the law demands, and publish and spread, far and wide, your liberality in free gifts to your priests

¹ *Targ. Pesh. Vulg. De Wette.* Ewald says, "Ye will cast away your images of Rimmona—the female of Rimmon—on the mountains." Others read, "to Hermon." Some "to the Harem." If Armenia be correct, Amos here gives the first hint of the Assyrian captivity. Hitzig translates the clause, "and will rush to the hills as a refuge."

² This is a difficult passage. It is translated "every three days," by most. Indeed the whole question of Jewish tithes is obscure. See Deut. xii. 5-18; xiv. 22, 29; xxvi. 12-14. From these passages it would appear: (1) that a tenth of the whole produce of the soil was assigned for the support of the Levites. (2) That out of it they were to dedicate a tenth to God, for the use of the high priest. (3) That a tithe—apparently a second tithe—was to be applied to festival purposes. (4) That every third year either this tithe or a third tithe was to be eaten in company with the poor and the Levites. But this explanation is disputed in some details; great difference of opinion prevailing as to the second and third tithes. Michaelis, *Mos. Recht*, vol. iii. § 192. *Zehnte*, in the various Lexicons. Knobel's *Komment.* Ewald's *Alterthümer*, etc., etc.

and altars; for you love to do this, O children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.

"But mark what I think of such worship, says the Lord, by the punishments I have already sent on you. I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"I have also withheld from you the latter rain for three months before the harvest,¹ and made it rain in one city and not on another; one place had rain, and another which had none, withered. Two or three cities had thus to go to a third, to drink water, and could not get enough. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"I have smitten your corn crops with rust and blight: locusts² have devoured the fruits of your gardens, vineyards, fig trees and olive trees. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"I have sent among you the Egyptian plague:³ I have slain your warriors with the sword, and have caused your horses, in which you trusted, to be carried off by the enemy,⁴ and I have made the stench of the slain horses and men in your camps to rise up in your nostrils. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"I have sent destruction among you like that by which I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah⁵ and ye were like a brand saved from the burning. Yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!"

¹ Rain does not fall in Palestine during half the year, but the other half, from October to March is one long rainy season, varied by intervals of beautiful weather. The early rains are those which in autumn prepare the ground for the seed. The latter rains, those of spring, continue till the crop is far advanced, refreshing and filling it out. To have no rain for three months before harvest implied a failure of the crops.

² Perhaps the terrible plague of locusts in Joel's day; possibly, another visitation.

³ Egypt was the home of the Plague.

⁴ Seemingly an allusion to the destruction of the military strength of Israel by the Syrians. 2 Kings xiii. 7.

⁵ Apparently an allusion to the awful earthquake mentioned in Zech. xiv. 5.

Since all these lighter judgments had not led to their repentance, God would proceed to severer visitations.

"Therefore I will deal with you, O Israel, as I have spoken by my servant—I will destroy your city and lead you away captive. And, since I will thus deal with you—Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, when He comes in this awful judgment on your nation! For behold! Jehovah is He who formed the mountains and created the wind, and tells man what is in his thoughts, and makes the morning-dawn and the darkness, and walks on the heights of the earth. Jehovah, the God of Hosts, is His name!"

But, now, swelling pity fills the heart of the prophet.

"Hear ye this word¹ which I utter concerning you: this lamentation, O House of Israel!

"The Virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise; she is prostrate on the ground; there is none to raise her up! For thus saith the Lord, Jehovah! The town from which a thousand men went forth shall have only a hundred left, and that from which a hundred went out shall have only ten left, to keep alive the House of Israel.

"Therefore, thus saith Jehovah to the House of Israel! Seek Me and ye shall escape these judgments and live! But seek not Bethel; go not near Gilgal; make no pilgrimages to Beer-sheba.² For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity and Bethel come to nought. Seek Jehovah and ye shall live! Seek Him, lest He burst, like fire, on the House of Joseph,³ and consume Bethel, with no one to quench it.

Ye who turn justice into wormwood and cast down uprightness to the ground, seek Him who makes the Seven Stars⁴ and Orion,⁵ and turns the night—dark as the shade of death—into morning, and darkens day into night: that calls for the waters of the sea and pours them over the face of the earth.⁶ Jehovah is

¹ Amos v. ² The three seats of the calf worship. ³ = Israel.

⁴ Rather, Sirius, *Stern*. Heb. Kima; generally, "The Pleiades." Job ix. 9; xxxviii. 31. ⁵ Heb. Kesil—the giant. *Schrader*.

In A. V. generally "fool." Isa. xiii. 10, "constellations."

⁶ Perhaps an allusion to the great earthquake wave.

His name! He causeth destruction to flash¹ forth upon the strong, and brings it down on the fortress. Ye are they who hate the unjustly accused who defends himself before you at the gate,² and abhor him who speaks for the right. Since, then, ye trample upon the poor, and extort from him bribes and gifts of wheat, ye shall not dwell in the houses of cut stone which ye have built, nor drink wine of the pleasant vineyards ye have planted! For I know your many sins; your numerous transgressions. Ye are they who oppress the just; who take bribes; who turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. The wise man, therefore, is silent in such a time, because it is evil!

"Seek good and not evil, that ye may live! In that case Jehovah, the God of Hosts, shall really be with you, as ye now falsely boast Him to be. Hate evil; love good; establish justice in the gate, and it may be that Jehovah, the God of Hosts, will have pity on the remnant of Joseph!"

But he foresees that they will not listen to his warnings and goes on to paint their doom still more fully.

"Therefore,³ because ye will not hear Me, thus, again, saith Jehovah, the God of Hosts! The curse must descend; the enemy must be let loose on the land! Then, when he is so, the lament of dirge flutes and wailing women shall rise for the dead in all your streets: and in all the highways men will cry Alas! alas! and they will call in the husbandman from the field to raise the death-cry or make sad music, and the public wailing women to lament. And there shall be wailing in all the vineyards, for I will pass through the midst of thee, in judgment.

"Yet there are some among you so blind as to wish for the day of Jehovah. Some, who think He will come on their behalf; not to punish them! Some, who mock at the long delay of that awful time! Woe to you who in blindness or mockery desire that that day were come! What will it be to you? The day of Jehovah shall be darkness and not light; evil and not prosperity.⁴ One danger shall no sooner be escaped than you will fall into another; as if a man fled from a lion and a bear met him, or, having come into his house where he fancied he would be safe, should

¹ *Hitzig.*

² Amos v. 16.

³ Where trials were held.

⁴ Joel iii. 15.

lean his hand on the wall, and a serpent, hid in a chink of it, bit him. The day of Jehovah shall verily be darkness and not light; pitchy darkness without a gleam of light!

"But I know on what your confidence rests in anticipation of that awful day. On your zeal in your worship and your outward devotion. But I hate and despise your church festivals; I smell no sweet savour from the sacrifices of the great crowds at your feasts. Though you bring Me burnt sacrifices and flour offerings I will not accept them. The thank offering of your fatted calves I will not look upon. Take away from before Me the noise of your hymns, chanted round your altars; let Me not hear the music of the harps of your priests! Instead of these, let justice flow down your streets like water and righteousness like mighty streams. True religion, not outward, is the thing that can save you! Think you I lay stress on your empty ceremonies and rites? Did your fathers offer sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness through the forty years of their wanderings, O House of Israel? Yet, though they did not, I brought them into this land. Therefore, because you have done the very opposite, ye will lift up your idols in the day when you go into captivity—Siccuth, your king,—not Jehovah,—and Kewan,¹ your star god, whom you have adopted from Tyre and from the Euphrates, and I will lead you away as prisoners from this place to beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah, the God of Hosts."²

How many separate addresses are included in what now forms the "Prophecies of Amos," it is impossible to say, nor can it be known over how long a time their delivery extended. It is certain, however, that there are several, for discourses among the Jews, as among other

¹ Or Chiun—the planet Saturn. The Assyrian God Sakkut—the Terrible One, was another name for Saturn, or Moloch. *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 397. Thus, even under the dynasty of Jehu, who had so fiercely uprooted Phenician idolatry, it had once more raised its head in Israel, in the days of Jeroboam II. It is to be noticed that this passage contains the first allusion to the carrying away of Israel, but Amos does not yet name Assyria. This is done first by Hosea, in the next generation.

² *Ewald. Schrader*, art. *Sterne*, in *Bib. Lex.* See vol. ii. p. 278.

Oriental, have in all ages been marked by their pointed brevity.¹ The sixth chapter seems to mark a distinct outburst of holy indignation at some instance of wickedness in the upper classes, which had obtruded itself on the prophet, but it is levelled at the transgressors in Jerusalem and Samaria, alike.

"Woe to those² who think themselves secure under Uzziah, in Zion; to those who think themselves safe under Jeroboam in the mountain of Samaria—the great men of 'the first of the nations,' as you proudly call yourselves—ye, round whom the House of Israel gather, as their rulers and chiefs! Ye that care nothing for Jehovah and make little of His threatened wrath! Pass beyond the Euphrates to Calneh,³ and see how He has brought it low by the hand of the Assyrian; thence go to Hamath the Great;⁴ then go down to Gath of the Philistines, which Binnirari has so lately oppressed;⁵ are they better off now than you; is their territory greater than yours—who are no less guilty than they? Go to them, and see, you whom Jehovah has thus long spared; who will not believe that the evil day will come, and cherish oppression ever more closely; who loll on couches of ivory, and stretch on your divans, and eat the lambs of the flocks and the fatted calves from the stalls; who sing at your drunken feasts, to the murmur of the harp, and, like David, contrive for yourselves new instruments of music; who drink bowls of un-mixed wine,⁶ and anoint yourselves with the costliest perfumed

¹ Delitzsch's *Ein Tag in Capernaum*, p. 131.

² Amos vi.

³ This name does not occur in the Assyrian inscriptions. The city was apparently on the Euphrates. *Schrader*, pp. 19, 250. *Schmoller* says it is the ancient Ktesiphon in Babylonia, on the Tigris.

⁴ Hamath had been taken by Shalmaneser II., when it was a member of the Syrian league against him under Benhadad. *Obelisk*, pp. 60, 88. It was also again stormed by Sargon, in 720; two years after the fall of Samaria. *Lenormant*, vol. ii. p. 354.

⁵ *Keilinschriften*, p. 14.

⁶ *Schmoller* says 'from sacred vessels.'

oils, but give yourselves no thought of the ruin of your country. None the less will He on this account visit you! Because ye act thus ye shall be led off into captivity at the head of the train of your people, and the drunken screams of the revellers will be hushed!

"The Lord Jehovah has sworn by Himself, saith Jehovah, the God of Hosts! I abhor all this of which Israel is proud, and hate its palaces where such scenes are witnessed, and will give up Samaria, with all that are in it, as a prey to the spoiler. And in that day, if by a rare chance there be still ten men left by the enemy in one household, they shall die of the pestilence that will follow. And should the only friend¹ left to burn a man's corpse—for there will be no room to bury it—come to do so, and carry away the bones to render the last offices to them, and ask some one in the inmost part of the house as he does so: 'Is there any one yet alive besides thee?' he will answer, 'No.' And the visitor will say, 'Hush! it is no use to pray to Jehovah now, for He will not help,'² for behold He has ordained all this, and will smite down the great house to ruins and the cottage to pieces."

"It is as mad to try to run horses on the rough rocks of the Negeb or to plough there with oxen³—I know these parts well—as to turn justice to gall as ye do, or fair dealing to wormwood! You glory in an empty dream when you say that Israel has won dominion under Jeroboam, by its own strength. God will raise up a nation against you that will plunder you, from Hamath in the far north to the torrent of the Arabah below the Dead Sea."⁴

The characteristics of public discourse among the Hebrews have doubtless been the same from the earliest age of the prophets, for no people have shown themselves more unchangeably conservative in their religious customs than the Jews. In the Talmud and Midraschim this is constantly illustrated; parable, proverb, and figurative presentation following each other with striking

¹ Lit. uncle or cousin.

² Amos vi. 8-11. *Eichhorn. Noyes. Hitzig. Schmoller.*

³ Wilton's *Negeb*, p. 60.

⁴ Amos vi. 12-14. Assyria is meant.

copiousness; the whole utterance, however, as I have noticed, being no less brief than vivid. Such a style, indeed, could not be protracted through lengthened harangues; it would overburden the hearers. Brevity was imperative to give opportunity for reflection.¹ The appeals, expostulations, and threatenings of Amos were, therefore, doubtless, delivered at different times; perhaps at different places.

That which now begins takes the new form of visions. He had gone boldly to Bethel, the headquarters of the established religion of the northern kingdom, to lift his voice before the king himself, who was there at the time, and to warn the crowds who had gathered, perhaps for their yearly religious feast, at this great centre. He tells them² that Jehovah had shown him three visions: the first, that of another visitation by locusts, which came up after the early grass had been cut and taken away for the royal horses and mules,³ when only the aftergrowth remained, on which the people depended for the fodder of their cattle. The grass of the open country had already been attacked and eaten, and that of the meadows, so essential to such a community, was about to be consumed, when Amos pleaded with God for pity. "Such a blow, O Lord," cried he, "will ruin the land, already so weak and helpless; spare it, good Lord,"—and the supplication was heard: the locusts disappeared. But now, a second vision presented itself. A terrible consuming fire glowed over the neighbouring ocean till it dried it up, and then spread to the land, on which it presently destroyed a part of that which had been saved just before from the locusts. Supplication had averted the first calamity, but when now repeated it could only limit the

¹ F. Delitzsch, *Ein Tag in Capernaum*, p. 31.

² Amos vii. 1-9.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 5.

second : a heavier destruction than before was, this time, allowed. The third vision followed : A wall appeared, over which stood Jehovah, showing with a plumb-line how far it was from being true and upright. Standing in the heart of the land, not on the borders, the wall symbolized the House of Israel ; its condition was a figure of that of the people as a whole, and its fate showed that the evil to come would not be local, but universal. Utterly worthless, it must be wholly pulled down ! The prophet no longer made any supplication on its behalf. There was, now, only judgment, without appeal. " Jehovah has said," cried Amos, " I will not forgive this people Israel, any more. The high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."¹ The country would be smitten by a foreign foe and the nation carried off into captivity.

This dark prediction of steadily advancing evil had been uttered apparently under the very shadow of the temple of Bethel, before its high priest, Amaziah, and the worshipping multitude. Awed by the sacred character of the prophet and his ominous words, no interruption had hitherto been offered. Now, however, that he ventured to speak of the king and the royal family, the high priest could no longer be silent. It might compromise himself if he were so, when treason was spoken. A message to Jeroboam in the neighbouring palace informed him that Amos, who seems to have been already known to the king, since his name only is given, had conspired against him, here, in the very heart of the land, and before the assembled people. His words were so unmeasured, so fierce and disloyal, that bad results must follow. He had said that the king would die by the sword, and

¹ Amos vii. 8, 9.

Israel be carried off captive to a foreign country. Neither Jeroboam nor Amaziah dared to put the prophet to death. He might say what he chose in Judah, but must leave the northern kingdom.¹ Yet the order to leave was insolent in the extreme. "Begone," said Amaziah, in effect, "to Judah, and there eat your bread in peace, and no longer trouble yourself with what does not concern you." As if, says Hitzig, he had told him "Begone, eat your pudding, slave, and hold your peace."² "I came," answered Amos, with dignity, "not of my own accord, humble man as I am, but at the bidding of God. It is He whom you dishonour in rejecting me. He commands me to tell you that your wife shall be put to shame by the enemy when Bethel is taken; your children killed; your lands seized, and you yourself led off into captivity. Israel, also, shall surely go into captivity in a foreign land."³ Then, or while still on the borders of Israel, he delivered his last warnings. He sees a vision of a wicker basket of ripe summer fruit. It is an emblem of the approaching national ruin. The land is ready for judgment. The songs of the palace⁴ shall be turned to howlings in that day, for the dead shall be too many to bury: they will be cast out in silence and left as they lie! Woe to the oppressors of the poor in that dreadful time; the men who grudge the hindrance to money making caused by new moons and Sabbaths; who starve the people by heightening the price of corn, and by selling it with false weights! Jehovah had sworn by the excellency of Jacob, that is, by Himself, that He would never forget any of these works. A flood of Divine indignation would sweep over Israel, rising awfully and sinking again, like the waters of the Nile! In that terrible day when Jehovah

¹ Amos vii. 10-13.² Hitzig's *Amos*, p. 127.³ Amos vii. 14-17.⁴ *Ewald. Hitzig.*

visited the sins of the people, gloom would rest on the land like that of the great eclipse they had seen in the year B.C. 763.¹ Lamentations as when one mourns for an only son would fill the land. Then, at last, they would seek through the whole kingdom for a prophet to tell them how to win back the favour of God, but they would seek in vain. They had delighted in their idols and calves; they had sworn by them as dearest to their hearts,—by the Asherah in Samaria, the calf in Dan, and the festal pilgrimage to Beersheba. But it would do them no good; they would fall as a nation, and never rise again.² Another vision, announced, it may be, at a subsequent time, closes the prophet's warning.³ He sees Jehovah standing on the great altar in front of the sanctuary at Bethel, and commanding the angel of destruction to smite down the capitals of the pillars which support the temple, and bury the worshippers under its fragments. No spot in the land would be left for those who escaped this catastrophe. If they hid in Sheol, or climbed, for safety, to heaven, they would be dragged thence; the top of Carmel would not shelter them; no, nor the depths of the sea.⁴ Even to be led off captive would be no security; they would be destroyed by the sword! Jehovah has power to do this! They had seen in the great earthquake, how when He touches the land it melts before Him and fills all with terror; how He makes it rise and sink in waves like the rising and sinking of the Nile! It is He who builds His palace in the heavens and rests the vault of the firmament on the earth; who raises the sea into waves, as they

¹ There were total eclipses in the years B.C. 803 and 784. *Hitzig*, p. 130. Also on the 15th June, 763. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Ant.*, vol. vi. p. 12. See Amos viii. 9, 10.

² Amos viii. 9-14.

³ *Ibid.* ix. 1 ff.

⁴ For the water serpent, see Isaiah xxvii. 1. Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14.

had seen on the awful day of the earthquake, and hurls it on the land! Israel is no longer the people of God; it is no more to Him than the Ethiopians, or the Philistines, or the Syrians. Its sins have turned Him from it; He has utterly cast it off.

Yet He will still retain a people for Himself! If there be any faithful to Him in Israel He will sift them out from the chaff and save them.¹ The kingdom of Judah, moreover, shall be upheld; the broken walls of the now fallen House of David will be repaired and strengthened and it will be raised to its ancient glory. Edom and all the nations shall once more be theirs.² Prosperity will return. There will be so much land to plough after the winter crops, that the summer harvest, then earlier than in the past, will be ripe before the ploughman has finished, and the vintage will be so great that it will not be wholly gathered before the late sowing has begun; the mountains will drop sweet wine, and streams of it will seem to melt the hills.³

Though from Judah, Amos has no thought but of brotherly love to Israel. Her captivity will return in those happy days and be reunited to Judah; and all the tribes, once more a great whole, shall dwell, thenceforward, in rich prosperity, in the happy and fruitful land!

¹ Amos ix. 9, 10.

² *Ibid.* ix. 11, 12.

³ Furrer's *Palästina*, p. 92. It is to be noticed that verse 13 is virtually a quotation of the 5th verse of the 26th chapter of Leviticus. So much for the late origin of that book! If Amos knew it, when was it written? Hitzig attempts to solve the difficulty by supposing Leviticus to have been compiled in Jehoshaphat's day (2 Chron. xvii. 7), but this will hardly suit the new school, who suppose it an invention of the priests during the Exile.* But even Hitzig is arbitrary in his older date. It is a mere conjecture. Surely modesty befits the new critics who so confidently dogmatize and so widely differ.

* Stade, *Gesch. des V. Israel*, p. 62.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM.

ASSYRIAN KINGS.

ASSUR-NIZAR, B.C. 753-746; TIGLATH-PILESER II. (PUL), 745-728;
SHALMANESER IV., 727-723; SARGON, 722-706.

MORE than two hundred years had passed since the death of David, when Amaziah of Judah, the eleventh in descent from him, fell a victim to unpopularity. His grandfather Ahaziah had been murdered by Jehu; his father, Jehoash, by a palace conspiracy. The lawlessness of the northern kingdom had tainted the southern; a king's life was no longer safe. Yet the general loyalty to the reigning dynasty remained undisturbed. No rival to the legitimate heirs thought of offering himself. The shadow of the great name of David still surrounded its inheritors with a measure of sacredness. The earlier part of Amaziah's reign had been glorious, but his elation had led to his ruin. Rashly insisting on attacking the proud House of Jehu, he had seen Jerusalem taken and in part dismantled; its treasures carried off; the sons of its chief men taken to Samaria as hostages; and he, himself, after having been a prisoner, had been indebted for his throne to the moderation of his opponent. The broken down bastions of the city, and the enforced absence of the hostages from their families, had kept the disgrace

rankling in the bosoms of the citizens, till, at last, fifteen years after his humiliation, he was murdered at Lachish, whence his body was afterwards brought to Jerusalem for burial.¹

He was succeeded by his son Azariah, or Uzziah, a lad of sixteen. Joash, his father's conqueror, was still reigning in Samaria, nor was he succeeded by his son Jeroboam II., who was 31 years of age at Uzziah's accession, till the fifteenth year of that great king. Uzziah's father, in spite of his defeat, had raised the kingdom in some degree from its long depression, by his victory over Edom; his son was destined to restore it to greater glory than it had enjoyed since the death of Solomon. The good results of supreme power, in the hand of an able and upright ruler, have seldom been more strikingly shown. He roused the fainting spirit of the nation, and kindled its old vigour and stormy energy to the noblest achievements. Nor was he less great in peace than in war and politics. The prosperity of the country kept pace with the respect it won among the nations.² Edom, which his father had subdued, was once more independent, but Uzziah early in his reign reconquered it, and re-established the long intermitted sea trade with India, from Elath, a port on the Red Sea,³ near Ezion-geber.

For the first time, also, since David, Judah was strong enough to attack and overcome the Philistines. Their principal cities, Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod were taken, and dismantled; and new towns founded in their districts.⁴ The southern Arab tribes in Philistine pay, who had overwhelmed King Jehoram,⁵ were likewise crushed, and

¹ 2 Kings xiv. 19, 20. 2 Chron. xxv. 27, 28.

² 2 Kings xiv. 21, 22; xv. 1 f. 2 Chron. xxvi. 1 f.

³ 1 Kings ix. 26. 2 Chron. viii. 17.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxvi. 6.

⁵ 2 Chron. xxi. 16.

Uzziah's name spread abroad as far as the frontier of Egypt.¹ As confusion and disaster increased in the northern kingdom, moreover, large portions of the old territory of Israel east of the Jordan fell into his hands. Ammon, Moab, and the districts connected with them, gladly put themselves under his protection and paid him tribute.² Nor did he fall into the error of rash security. The hostages taken from his father having been restored, he repaired and strengthened the walls of Jerusalem, erecting towers at the angles, and arming them with the most improved "artillery" of the day, such as catapults, shooting huge arrows and hurling weighty stones at an approaching enemy.³ His army, moreover, was reorganized, and, thoroughly equipped with shields, spears, helmets, and cuirasses; the lighter troops having bows and slings.⁴ The whole fighting manhood of the kingdom was entered on muster-rolls, so as to be available to any extent; the aggregate rising to no fewer than 307,500, with a select corps of Gibborim numbering 2,600 men.⁵ It had almost caused a rebellion when David inaugurated a military census of the kingdom, but under Uzziah such a measure had come to be a matter of course.⁶

He was no less active in other directions. Devoted to everything connected with the country, he built towers in the outlying districts, for the protection of his numerous flocks and herds, and caused wells to be dug wherever required, for their wants. The slopes of the Shephelah and the upland pastures of the Negeb, once more, as in David's time, pastured the royal cattle and sheep, under the king's herdsmen and shepherds. The crown lands in the valleys were carefully tilled, and the districts suited

¹ 2 Chron. xxvi. 8.

² 2 Chron. xxvi. 15.

³ *Ibid.* ver. 12, 13.

⁴ Isa. xvi. 1.

⁵ *Ibid.* ver. 14.

⁶ *Ibid.* ver. 11.

for the grape planted with vineyards.¹ Wide prosperity, as Joel foretold, was following the religious reformation he had inaugurated.

Yet Uzziah's highest distinction was his loyalty to the old religion, to which he adhered with a sincerity and enthusiasm that reacted powerfully on the nation. The prophets were once more in favour. One especially is named. "Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God,"² seems to have been the royal tutor and counsellor. The altered spirit of the times showed itself in the rise of such men as Amos, Micah, and Isaiah. A vigorous religious sentiment had spread since Joel's time, and, among others, animated the king. The Spirit was indeed being poured out on the nation. Hosea, who rose in Israel in the end of Jeroboam's reign, amidst the deepening corruption of the northern kingdom, looked, with a tender yearning, to Judah, as the one hope of his race for its spiritual future.³ But, unhappily, the evil which had spread so widely in the north was slowly gaining ground in Judah also, as the watchful eyes of the prophets noticed, with ever increasing sadness.

For a while, however, Joel's great religious revival held its ground, yielding only slowly to the injurious influences around. A number of Psalms attributed to this time show how vigorously the higher principles of the past were cherished, at least by a noble few. Ewald assigns the 6th, 12th, 13th, 23rd, 27th, 30th, 39th and 62nd to this period, but as their superscriptions represent them as written by David, we must hesitate to accept this later date for them. Pious souls, however, in an

¹ Carmel, 2 Chron. xxvi. 10—garden land. The hill-chain of Carmel was in the hands of Israel.

² 2 Chron. xxvi. 5.

³ Hosea i. 7.

age which saw the birth of Isaiah, would often recur to these holy songs, so fitted to express their lofty aspirations and tenderest emotions, no less than their humility and godly awe. The temple services and private gatherings would echo such strains as those of the 12th Psalm.

"Help, Jehovah, for the godly man ceaseth;
The faithful fail from among the children of men.
They speak falsehood one with another;
With flattering lips and a double heart do they speak.
Destroy, O Jehovah! the flattering lips,
The tongue that speaks proud things;
Which says 'With our tongues will we prevail,
Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?'"¹

The pure and lofty words of the 62nd Psalm would find a response in all faithful bosoms;

"Truly my soul waiteth upon God;
From Him cometh my salvation.
He only is my rock and my salvation;
He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.
How long will ye storm against a man?
How long will ye rush at him, all of you,
As at a shaking wall or a tottering fence?²
My soul, wait thou only upon God!
My expectation is from Him!

Trust in Him at all times!
Ye people pour out your heart before Him!
God is a refuge for us.

¹ Ps. xii. 1-11.

² The word is *jedar*, and means a wall of rough, shapeless stones of all sizes, built without mortar. *Jedars* are still the ordinary fences for gardens, vineyards, etc., and vary in height from four to six feet. After the storms of winter they always need repair; the rains washing away the earth from beneath them and leaving them frail and "tottering." Neil's *Palestine*, p. 52. Such dry walls are common in Britain.

The sons of men are but a breath ;
 Mortals are at best a lie,
 Laid in the balance, the whole are like a breath.
 Put no trust in fraud ;
 Be not blinded by unjust gain ;
 If wealth increase, think little of it.
 One word has God spoken ;
 Two are there I have heard ;
 That power rests with God,
 And that mercy also, O God, is with Thee ;
 For Thou renderest to every man according to his work."¹

Joel's words were bearing fruit. Not a few had "torn their hearts and not their garments,"² in earnest hope that the nation would be persuaded to do the same ; that God might dwell in the midst of them and keep them from ever being ashamed.³ Judah had already triumphed over the heathen round, as the prophet had promised. Only true godliness was needed in the people at large to secure such a vigorous spiritual life as would make them in the highest sense a kingdom of priests. Nor was religious enthusiasm ever more imperatively required. Trouble lowered over the North which might speedily break on Judah also and crush it. As at other periods of history, it seemed, moreover, as if nature herself were passing through a crisis. The ever memorable locust swarms of Joel's day more than once partially returned ;⁴ drought, and famine, and the plague, threatened the land, if they had not already invaded it,⁵ and now, as Uzziah's reign was closing, came a physical convulsion so terrible that for generations it was known as The Earthquake,⁶ and furnished a date from which events

¹ Ps. lxii. 1-5, 8-12.

² Joel ii. 13.

³ Joel iii. 17 ; ii. 27.

⁴ See Amos vii. 1.

⁵ Amos iv. 6-10.

⁶ Amos i. 1. Palestine has been repeatedly visited by severe earthquakes. Josephus mentions one that happened in the year

were reckoned. The imagery of the prophets of the age reflects the deep impression it left. Towns and villages were overthrown like the doomed cities of the plain; thick darkness obscured the sun at midday; the ocean burst over the land, like the Nile over Egypt;

B.C. 30. Judea was covered with ruins, and about 10,000 men perished by the fall of houses. *Ant.*, XV. v. 2. In A.D. 1151, the Hauran was in the same way laid waste by a physical convulsion. In 1837, a terrible earthquake laid Tiberias and Safed in ruins. The line of disturbance extended, in the direction of the figure of the Jordan valley, for nearly 500 miles, with a lateral breadth of 90 to 100 miles. The shock was felt at Beirut and even in Cyprus. The heat of the thermal springs at Tiberias rose too high to be registered by ordinary thermometers, though whether the water actually boiled is not told. The earth opened and shut in great clefts, swallowing up many persons alive (see *Num.* xvi. 32). Seven hundred perished in Tiberias alone. So frequent, indeed, are earthquakes in Palestine, that the houses in Lebanon and Anti-lebanon are built, as a rule, only one storey high, with flat roofs, on account of them, and large buildings in many cases show signs of the sinking or elevation of parts of their walls. Sodom and Gomorrah appear to have perished by an earthquake. Prof. Fraas, in *Biehlm.* Furrer, in *Schenkel.* Ruetschi, in *Herzog*, art. *Erdbeben*.

Allusions to the phenomena of earthquakes are not infrequent in the poetical books of Scripture. In Psalm civ. we read,

“At Thy rebuke the mountains flee;
At the voice of Thy thunder they tremble away;
—Mountains rise and valleys sink—
To the place which Thou hadst founded for them.”

Ver. 7, 8 (*Ewald*).

In Ps. xviii. 7, we read—

“The earth shook and trembled
The foundations also of the hills* moved and were shaken.”

See also 1 Kings xix. 11. Isa. liv. 10. Matt. xxiv. 7; xxvii. 51. On this subject, Dr. Pusey writes very fully in his *Minor Prophets*, p. 189.

* *Ewald*, *Heavens*.

the land trembled and rose and fell as if in waves;¹ the mountains seemed to melt and the valleys to be cleft, as wax before fire:² men fled hither and thither, in blind dismay from before the reeling hills and the yawning plains.³ An incident which darkened the last years of Uziah is connected by Josephus with this awful event, though the historical books make no allusion to any relation between them. David and Solomon had discharged priestly duties without any remonstrance; but the reformation under Jehoiada, and the long pupilage of Jehoash, had consolidated the power of the priests, and enabled them to claim an exclusive right to perform the sacred offices. Uziah, however, we are told, did not acknowledge this recent innovation, and having put on priestly robes on a day of high festival, entered the Holy Place to offer incense on the golden altar. For the first time, however, in the history of the monarchy, the royal assumption of such duties was resented as a sacrilege. The high priest Azariah,⁴ with eighty of his colleagues, met the king and required him to desist. But Uziah, says Josephus, was indignant, and threatened to put them to death, if they were not silent. Forthwith, he adds, a great earthquake shook the ground, rending the very temple, so that the sun shone through the opened roof, full on the face of the king, and as it did so a spot of leprosy showed itself on his brow. Thus rendered unclean, he was forthwith seized and driven out of the sacred limits.⁵ It is at least certain that he became a leper shortly before his death, and henceforth lived in a house apart, leaving the management of affairs in the hands of Jotham, his son. His very grave was dug in the field near the royal tombs, that they might not be

¹ Amos iv. 11, 13; v. 8, 18; ix. 5.² Micah i. 4.³ Zech. xiv. 4-6.⁴ 2 Chron. xxvi. 17, 20.⁵ Jos., *Ant.* IX. x. 4.

defiled by holding a leprous corpse.¹ It is a striking illustration of the awfulness of the earthquake thus associated with the punishment of one of the best of Jewish kings, that in the days of Josephus, half the Mount of Olivet was believed to have been torn off by it and rolled in hideous confusion over a space of four furlongs, blocking up the ancient roads and overwhelming the royal gardens.²

The signal growth of priestly claims and authority, shown in the prohibition of Uzziah from exercising the sacred functions as his predecessors had done, marked a turning point in the religious history of the nation. From this time the king and hierarchy stood in more or less antagonistic relations to each other. The sacred order came into greater prominence than ever before, and for the first time monopolized the performance of the public ministrations of religion.³ The temple ceremonial was henceforth greatly developed and zealously maintained. Feast days, new moons, Sabbaths and solemn assemblies,⁴ were rigidly observed. The sacrifices of rams and bullocks, lambs and he goats, were regulated by strict rules. The ritual of worship was finally established in elaborate completeness on the basis of the ancient arrangements of David and Solomon, and under the exclusive care of a watchful and jealous hierarchy. But this enthusiasm for forms, however earnest and sincere under Jehoiada, in the first reaction against the neglect, and, it may be, abuses of half heathen times, passed before long, as all ritual is apt to do, into a merely mechanical service. Fanaticism on the one hand and hollow insincerity on the other turned the priesthood into the worst foes of healthy spiritual life.

¹ 2 Chron. xxvi. 21, 23. *Heb.*

² *Ant.*, IX. x. 4.

³ Joel i. 9, 13; ii. 17.

⁴ Hos. ii. 11. Isa. i. 13, 14.

This striking development of high sacerdotalism found its antidote in the rise of the new class of prophets, of which Joel and Amos were among the first representatives. Elijah had been the last, as he was the greatest, of the prophets of the past. Elisha had in many ways differed from him, and Gehazi proved immeasurably beneath his master. The order had been characterized till Elijah's time by isolation from the community, and by a sternness which made even kings tremble; by its mission to individuals rather than to the nation; by its ascetic habits, its strange garb, and the high-wrought excitement of its appearances, in which music played a prominent part. But things had gradually changed. Already in Ahab's day, it had become largely degenerate,¹ though the great truths enforced by its nobler members had penetrated the conscience of the nation, however much they might be neglected. Elisha had overthrown the House of Omri by active interposition, but the results of Jehu's elevation had not corresponded with the just expectations from it. His dynasty had soon fallen into the errors of its predecessors and proved a failure. The spirit of the times, also, was different. Violent political interference was no longer possible or desirable, on the part of the prophets. Their force in this direction had spent itself in the revolution of Jehu, and they could not return to it under the kings who succeeded him. In Judah, also, they had become more calm and measured. A spirit of disbelief in their claims had spread widely; in part through the increase of pretenders to inspiration. The younger school of prophets, foreshadowed by Micaiah in the days of Ahab, rose, in the person of Joel, first in Judah, then in the northern kingdom. No longer claiming political power, or raising

¹ 1 Kings xxii. 12.

and dethroning rulers, they appealed directly to the conscience of king and people. Laying aside the harshness of the past, they retained their nobler influences. They became freer and less involved in outward combinations. Eternal truths gained more prominence, and were urged more directly and distinctly. Gathering strength and confidence with years, they worked more beneficially, and with more permanent results. But their advancement to this high moral power was only gradual. Regenerated, and, as it were, spiritually new-born, the order was opposed by the mass of the people, who were unwilling to be disturbed in their moral security. Mocking the roughness of the old prophets, they repudiated the demands of the new. These had, moreover, to contend with multitudes of pretenders, who flattered the great, and claimed supernatural power through unholy acts. But the true prophets remained faithful to their calling, and, as years passed, showed themselves the noblest creation of Jewish history. Striving to introduce a new era, of faith working by love, they became the crown and glory of the spiritual life of Israel. Nor did outward discouragements daunt them. As the prosperity of the kingdom faded away they strove, ever more grandly, to save it by the righteousness they preached, and to encourage hope even amidst despair, by anticipations of a glorious Messianic era hereafter.

The reign of Jehoash¹ had already seen this new order—the Younger School of Prophets—in the appearance of Joel, the first of his illustrious brotherhood whose writings have come down to us. Though he still retained, in a measure, thoughts of war and vengeance, the keynote of all who followed him had been given in

¹ Credner, Movers, Hitzig, Ewald, Meier, Keil and David-on assign Joel to the reign of Jehoash.

his demand that the people "should rend their hearts and not their garments," and in his announcement of the necessity of an outpouring of the Spirit of God as a precursor of national blessing. Amos had risen in the generation after, as his successor in the great work of spiritual reformation, repeating often his very words and thoughts,¹ and denouncing as vigorously the merely ceremonial and outward. In Judah, Zechariah, the companion and counsellor of Uzziah, continued the sacred apostolate, advancing in clearness of spiritual vision; if indeed he be the prophet whose writings are now in the Canon; no longer picturing the Messiah as a warlike monarch, but as the Prince of Peace, riding on a lowly ass, just, and bringing salvation even to the heathen.²

In the northern kingdom the succession was maintained by the prophet Hosea, whose very tribe and birth-place are unknown. Rising apparently towards the close of the reign of Jeroboam II., his activity continued till the fifth year of Hezekiah, a period of fifty-nine years; during which those of his utterances which still survive, were delivered, at unknown intervals. The events of that long period are the best commentary on their burden.

While Jeroboam II. lived, things continued in a measure settled, but with his death, in a grey old age, the dissolution of the State became imminent. His son, Zachariah, the last prince of his House, ascended the throne in the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah, but had reigned

¹ Amos i. 2, compared with Joel iii. 16 and i. 10.

" i. 6-10, 11. " " iii. 19; iii. 6.

" iv. 9. " " ii. 3 ff.

² Zech. ix. 9. Some think there were two prophets of the name. The balance of proof, however, seems against this, and the writings known as those of Zechariah will consequently be noticed hereafter.

only six months¹ when he perished by a conspiracy headed by one Shallum;² in connection, perhaps, with a confederate whose name only, Kobolam, survives.³ The prophecy that Jehu's House should reign till the fourth generation, and then violently end, was thus literally fulfilled.⁴

Shallum himself held the throne only a month, when he, too, was dethroned and killed by Menahem, another military adventurer, who was able to retain power for ten years and to bequeath it to his son, Pekahiah. But before Menahem reached the object of his ambition, "three shepherds had been smitten"⁵ within a single month. So completely had lawless violence gained the upper hand in Israel.

That the new usurper should have reigned so long as he did is explained in part by the Assyrian inscriptions. Since the days when Shalmaneser II. had attacked Hazael of Syria, Israel and Judah had been free from Assyrian inroads, except that Binnirari, before he returned to Nineveh, had marched as a conqueror into Palestine as far as the limits of the tribe of Manasseh.⁶

The second king after that monarch—Assurdanili, who began his reign ten years after Binnirari's death—was the next invader of the west.⁷ Damascus was once more attacked, and Hadrach, a district of Syria, overrun.⁸ A

¹ 2 Kings xv. 8.

² 2 Kings xv. 10.

³ In 2 Kings xv. 10. The words "before the people" are in the *Sept.* "Keblaam," as if the name of a second conspirator. Ewald supposes the expression refers to a fellow-conspirator or rival of Shallum, of whom we know nothing further.

⁴ 2 Kings x. 30. Amos vii. 9.

⁵ Zech. xi. 8.

⁶ Smith's *Assyria*, p. 69.

⁷ So Smith, p. 71. Schrader makes Shalmaneser III. (B.C. 783-773) invade Lebanon to cut down cedars, and also attack Damascus. *Keilinschriften*, p. 314.

⁸ Zech. ix. 1.

few years later, however, the great city of Assur revolted, and Assurdanili's power of troubling Western Asia was checked. Nor did Assyria begin to extricate itself from these internal troubles till the year B.C. 745, when Pul, or Tiglath-pileser II.,¹ who was not of the royal family, seized the throne of Nineveh.²

Menahem's success in retaining his power so long, rose, in part, from the weakness of Syria through the repeated attacks of the Great King; in part, from the temporary weakness of Assyria itself; in part, from his judicious submission to Tiglath-pileser, when summoned to do so; but doubtless in some measure, also, from his able and energetic rule, which was hampered by no scruples of pity or weakness. His throne, in fact, rested largely on terror, for he waded through blood to reach it. The people of Tiphshah or Tappuah, not far from 'Irizah,³ and those of other towns, were ruthlessly butchered for adhering to Shallum and not opening their gates at once to his murderer. Nor did he shrink from cruelties which had seemed to the Syrian Hazael too shocking to be inflicted even on enemies, when Elisha foretold that he

¹ Pul is from Pil, in Pileser. *Schrader*, p. 127

² From a series of Babylonian dated tablets, in the British Museum, collated with the Canon of Ptolemy, an astronomer of the middle of the second century after Christ, it is found that from B.C. 763 to 745, when Pul seized the throne, a succession of revolts had shaken the empire. Hence the army had to be retained at home, and foreign campaigns were undertaken only when thought unavoidable—not, as hitherto—from choice. Six great rebellions are mentioned: an outbreak of the plague is noted, and for six years the army is said to have been kept "in the land"—that is in Assyria. In the eighteen years before the accession of Pul there were only five military expeditions, all, apparently, on a small scale. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Ant.*, vol. vi. pp. 12, 13.

³ Knevelan, in *Bib.-Lex.* Thenius reads 'Tappuah—a town in Ephraim.

would commit them. Raised by a ferocious soldiery to the crown, Menahem had the iron hand needed to keep them down, when once he was master. His kingdom extended beyond the Jordan, for he still retained Jeroboam's conquests, in part, though the districts on the south which had sought protection under Uzziah were left undisturbed.

Tiglath-pileser II., the Pul of the Bible, proved one of the most warlike of the later Assyrian kings. His annals show that he accompanied his armies in person to the wild mountains of Georgia and the Caspian Sea on the north; to the banks of the Indus on the east; and to the frontiers of Egypt, and the wastes of the Sinai Peninsula on the west and south. The annals of this fierce conqueror's reign, inscribed in his lifetime on a long series of alabaster tablets which lined the inner walls of his palace at Calah, a district of Nineveh, have unfortunately in great measure perished. The splendid building which contained them was dismantled in the next century by Esarhaddon, and the historical slabs carried off for a new palace, and set up in it, after the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser II. had been effaced. Hence only fragments of some, mutilated and left behind in the removal, have been found, giving a few broken glimpses of the Great King's rule. From these and from ancient authors, however, we find that Tiglath-pileser, after seizing the throne, to which he had apparently no legitimate title, and securing peace round Nineveh, set out in his first year, 745, against Babylon and Chaldæa at the mouths of the Euphrates;—the one, hated as the ancient rival of his capital, the other, as the refuge of Assyrian patriots or rebels. Ever victorious, he left a titular king at Babylon, and caught and crucified the prince of Chaldæa,¹ ending the campaign by causing himself to be

¹ *Keilinschriften*, p. 128.

proclaimed "king of the Sumirs and of Akkad" in Babylon itself. The year 744 also was spent in the east,¹ but in 743 he marched against Arpad² in Syria and received tribute from Tyre, Byblos, the island of Rhodes³ and Hamath. His tactics were those of his predecessors; to stamp out revolt by savage ferocity. He boasts of the multitudes killed in battle, or impaled when taken; of the pyramids of bodies he raised at the gates of cities he was besieging; of the desolation he made where these cities once stood, and of the throngs of prisoners of all ages and both sexes, whom he led into captivity and slavery, with all their possessions and their dishonoured gods.⁴ A grand durbar to receive the homage of the tributary kings, far and near, having been held at Arpad,⁵ he returned to the Euphrates, carrying off as many of the still surviving population as he had been able to seize.

From 742 to 740 there are no annals, but in 739 he again appeared in Syria, to break up a confederation which the "Hittite kings," under the inspiration of the powerful Uzziah of Judah, had formed to resist him. Hamath now felt the weight of his arm. Its people were swept off to Assyria and its power broken. The terror of these victories spread on every hand and secured the trembling submission of many local rulers. Another great durbar, to receive their homage and tribute, was held, we do not know where, in the following year, 738. A list still remains of seventeen of the royal personages, who appeared, either in person or by deputy; doubtless with lavish pomp and display.

Among these we find Rezin of Damascus, Hiram of Tyre, the kings of Byblos on the coast, of Carchemish on

¹ *Keilinschriften*, p. 140.

² Tel Erfad, north of Aleppo.

³ This name is doubtful.

⁴ *Menant*, pp. 137-148.

⁵ *Keilinschriften*, p. 141.

the Euphrates; the princes of Armenia; a queen from Arabia, and Menahem of Samaria. With a kingdom in anarchy, the latter could not resist Tiglath-pileser, and prudently submitted to the payment of 1,000 talents of silver, equal to £375,000¹ of our money, but worth in purchasing value perhaps twenty times as much. So enormous a sum was beyond the power of Menahem to defray from his ordinary revenues, but the rich men of his kingdom were made to feel the first pinch on their ill-gotten wealth² by having to contribute a forced loan to the king of fifty shekels of silver³ each. Yet this expenditure, though great, was well repaid by Tiglath, in return for it, confirming Menahem in his kingdom; an engagement which secured the active support of Assyria if he were attacked.

Uzziah does not appear on the list of tributaries. Vigorous and powerful, he doubtless reckoned on the support of the countries dependent on himself, and therefore omitted in the records of Assyrian feudatories of the day—the Philistines, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and others.⁴ Egypt, moreover, was always in the background, as a possible ally of any nation of Palestine against the Great King; promising them help if attacked, and in many cases instigating their rebellion, in the hopes of keeping Assyria at a distance from the Nile, which it eagerly coveted. Palestine, indeed, was to the Pharaohs, in respect

¹ *Keilinschriften*, p. 199.

² There were 3,000 shekels of silver in a talent, so that the payment of 1,000 talents by contributions of 50 shekels would require 60,000 contributors. This shows the number of rich men in the northern kingdom to have been still large. The shekel was apparently equal to 2*s.* 6*d.*, so that each had to give, nominally, £6 5*s.*; equal in reality to, perhaps, over £120 of our money.

³ 2 Kings xv. 20.

⁴ *Keilinschriften*, p. 143.

to the invader from the Euphrates, what Afghanistan is to us in relation to Russian advances in the East.

Not caring to attack Judah under such a king as Uziah, with, perhaps, the aid of Egypt if needed, Tiglath-pileser returned to Nineveh without attempting more than the destruction of the league with Hamath.

From 737 to 735 the affairs of Armenia and Chaldæa again occupied him, but in 734 he returned to Palestine, where Menahem had died, leaving his crown to his son Pekahiah. The lawlessness of the past, however, broke out afresh in Israel, as soon as the hand of a vigorous ruler like Menahem was removed. The army had raised him to the throne, and asserted its power only too successfully against his successor. Two years had hardly passed when a conspiracy to effect a revolution was formed by Pekah, the officer in command of the king's body guard. Supported by his troop, consisting apparently of about four hundred men,¹ including many from Gilead, his own district, Pekah, aided by fifty of them, succeeded in murdering the king while in his harem. Uziah was still nominally reigning in Judah, but had associated Jotham, his son, with him in the government, from the time of his attack of leprosy. His death, however, in the second year of Pekah's reign, left Jotham the contemporary of that ruler for his succeeding years.

Able and energetic, Pekah was perhaps the only man in the kingdom able to ward off its fall for a time. He had seized the crown while Pul, that is, Tiglath-pileser, was engaged in Armenia and Chaldæa in the years 737 to 735, and soon showed signs of resistance to Assyria. When, therefore, Pul invaded Philistia in 734, to punish its alliance with Uziah in 739 and its refusal to pay tribute, Israel had to suffer some of his displeasure.

¹ Sept.

Pekah had joined Rezin in an attempt to induce Jotham of Judah to join a new league against him, and on his refusal, they had revenged themselves by raids into his territory, to force him into their alliance.¹ On his death, the weak Ahaz, his son, continued his neutrality and was subjected to still greater affronts. A combined army of Syrians and Israelites invaded Judah and invested Jerusalem, for Pekah did not shrink even from an unpatriotic alliance with the hereditary foe of his race, to support his throne and crush his brethren of the southern kingdom.² Under these circumstances, Ahaz hastened to seek the help of the Great King, by becoming his tributary;³ a step which forced Pekah to do the same, so as to save himself, if possible, for the time, from invasion.⁴

Marching first to the west of Lebanon, Pul in his new campaign crushed all opposition in that quarter. A second corps had, meanwhile, invaded Gilead;⁵ the main army pushing on, steadily, to the south. "Hanno of Gaza," says the Great King, "fled before my troops, and escaped to Egypt. I took Gaza and carried off its spoil and its gods, and erected my royal image in it." The same is also recorded of other places, whose names are lost. From Philistia he marched into the wild Sinai Peninsula and Arabia, and forced a new queen who was

¹ 2 Kings xv. 37.

² The dates given in the Assyrian inscriptions, and corroborated by the Canon of Ptolemy, seem to show that the received chronology of the Kings and Chronicles for this period needs a searching revision. The length of the reigns both in Israel and Judah appear to involve corruptions of the text. Hitherto, indeed, all attempts to reconcile the figures given with the records of Assyria have been more or less doubtful.

³ *Keilinschriften*, p. 147.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-152.

⁵ This is a doubtful word in the inscriptions.

reigning there, to acknowledge his power.¹ Pekah had to suffer the loss of some towns and a large deportation of his people, though he saved his kingdom for a time by lowly abasement before the conqueror. His chief men, of the anti-Assyrian party, were carried off as slaves to the Euphrates, with all their wealth.² The words of Amos had already come true. The haughty oppressors of their poorer countrymen were stripped and humbled.

The territory on the east of the Jordan had now for the first time gained the foremost place in the kingdom, for Pekah was born in Gilead, and his supporters in the royal guard, in seizing the throne, were men of his clan. The names of two of them, indeed, which survive, carry us back to the transjordanic history of the times of Joshua and David; Argob, perhaps the chief of the wild lava district of the same name, in Western Manasseh, and Arieah, the lion-like, reminding us of the Gadite chiefs, "with faces like the faces of lions," who swam the Jordan when it was in flood, to join the son of Jesse. But while the boast of having given a king to the tribes ran through all the glens and valleys of Reuben, Gad, and Eastern Manasseh, the hour had struck for the punishment of their sins. The land was full of "evil-doers; polluted with blood."⁴ The curse of God had been denounced by His prophet on its idolatry and degeneracy and was now permitted to descend. Nor was it alone in its calamities. The hills of Upper Galilee as well as the glades of Gilead echoed the tread of the Assyrian battalions. The town of Ijon, in Naphtali,⁵ twenty miles north of Lake Merom; of Janoah, also in the mountains of that tribe; of Kedesh, five miles west of Lake Merom; of Hazer, close by Kedesh, were taken,

¹ *Keilinschriften*, p. 146. ² *Ibid.*, p. 146. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁴ Hosea vi. 1; vi. 8; xii. 11. ⁵ *Jos., Ant.*, IX. xiii. 1. See p. 33.

among others, and as many of their inhabitants as had not succeeded in fleeing from the enemy, were led off in long trains, to captivity, in Assyria. The whole of Upper Galilee, indeed, was swept as by a net. The smoke of burning villages darkened the air. The mountain caves were filled with pale multitudes who had hidden in them for their lives, till the flood of invasion rolled past. Across the Jordan, the rich meadows and wooded hills of Gilead saw the population hurrying, amidst loud wails, from the advancing foe; leaving behind all their wealth, as his prey. Yet vast numbers were taken, and added to the dismal columns of prisoners, to be marched to the Euphrates. Nearly half of the wide territory of Israel was finally torn from it. Other races than the chosen people were soon brought to repopulate the solitudes. "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea—the district towards the Mediterranean,—Galilee of the heathen, and the country beyond Jordan saw grievous affliction."¹ Samaria itself was forced to pay a tribute of ten talents of gold, 1,000 talents of silver, and other penalties not now legible on the annals. "All this," says Pul, "I carried off to Assyria. The districts belonging to Gilead, Abel (Beth Maachah), and others," he adds, "on the east of the land of the House of Omri—far off and broad, I joined, in their whole extent, to Assyria, and set my prefects over them."²

Damascus, now stripped of its allies and left isolated, was next attacked, but resisted bravely, succumbing only after a tedious siege during the years 733 and 732.³ But its fall, at last, was terrible. "I beheaded Rezin," says Pul, in his annals; "I besieged and took the palace of

¹ Isa. ix. 1.

² Smith supposes Hosea's accession to have taken place in B.C. 729.

³ Schrader, p. 149. 2 Kings xv. 29.

Benhadad, his father, built on a high mountain. Eight thousand of the citizens, with their goods, I carried off into captivity. Five hundred and eighteen towns of sixteen districts of the kingdom of Damascus I reduced to ashes."¹ The Bible adds that the population was led to Kir, which Josephus thinks was in Media, but others place in Armenia or even in Southern Babylonia. The great Syrian king, so long the embittered enemy of Israel, had at last vanished from among the powers of the world.

How long Pekah reigned is not known, for it seems necessary to shorten by one half the period of twenty years assigned to him as well as to lower the date; five different Assyrian and Greek authorities making it impossible to harmonize the chronology without these modifications. Hosea, whom Pul accepted as the vassal king over the now shrunken territory of Israel, was apparently a man of a nobler stamp. The payment of the heavy tribute demanded by the king of Assyria² galled a people which had fancied itself the first of the nations,³ and their new king, either from necessity or sympathy, took the popular side. A strong Egyptian faction existed in Samaria; perhaps in part from the old tradition of Jeroboam I. having found a home on the Nile in his exile, and having brought thence an Egyptian queen, but, still more, from the wily diplomacy of the Pharaohs, whose agents in all the courts of Palestine constantly urged alliance with their masters, and promised their help to any who refused to pay tribute to Assyria. In his difficult position Hosea seems to have tried to keep favour with the Great King,⁴ while secretly treating for assistance from So or Savah of Egypt, the

¹ Schrader, p. 153.

² 2 Kings xvii. 3.

³ Keilinschriften, p. 145.

⁴ Amos vi. 1.

second king of the Ethiopian¹ dynasty, in a projected revolt. But Assyrian spies in Samaria disclosed the treason to their master before it was ripe, and the doom of Hosea was settled. It was vain that he tried to be a good and true king,² seeking as far as he could to re-establish the worship of Jehovah. It was too late to save his country. Calf worship had indeed wellnigh ceased, for Pul had carried off the calf from Dan,³ and the one at Bethel was taken away by the Assyrians.⁴ Wishing to revive the old theocracy as far as possible, Hosea is said to have removed the frontier guards who turned back pilgrims anxious to go up to Jerusalem for worship. Things had gone too far, however, for any efforts to save the kingdom. The prophet Amos had not spoken of alliances with Assyria or Egypt, circumstances in his day not demanding that he should do so, but his successor Hosea—the same name as the reigning king—vehemently denounced them, now that they were

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 4. Schenkel, *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 338. Birch's *Egypt*, p. 165. Savah is called in Sargon's annals, "The Sultan," and is distinguished from "the Pharaoh, king of Egypt." He was, in fact, the lord paramount, with an Egyptian king under him, at Tanis, besides many other petty kings throughout the Valley of the Nile and the Delta. *Keilinschriften*, p. 157. The affix *ka* was added in Egypt to the names of the Ethiopian kings. It is the article. Thus Seveh or Schava becomes Schabaka. In the Bible this is contracted to So. On the Assyrian monuments to Schava. Savah, though the second king of the dynasty, was regarded as its real founder, from his ability and deeds. Lenormant's *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. iii. pp. 350-1.

² 2 Kings xvii. 2. Josephus, however, speaks of him as a wicked man and a despiser of the worship of God. *Ant.*, IX. xiii. 1.

³ This is a Jewish tradition.

⁴ Hos. x. 8. Beth-Aven = Bethel.

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in favour.¹ What his crowned namesake could have done otherwise, humanly speaking, is hard to imagine, for the help of God was promised only on the unfulfilled condition of Israel returning heartily to His service.

Pul or Tiglath-pileser II. had died in 728 or 727 and was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV.² A league had by this time been stirred up against Assyria by the intrigues of the Egyptian residents at Samaria and Tyre; Hosea, in alliance with the Phœnician city and perhaps some other Canaanite powers, undertaking to refuse tribute to Nineveh, on the strength of worthless promises of military aid from the Nile. To crush this revolt, Shalmaneser appeared in Palestine in 725 with his army.³ Unfortunately for Tyre, it had roused a bitter feeling against itself in the other Phœnician cities, leading them to throw themselves, as its foes, into the arms of the

¹ Hosea v. 13; vii. 11; viii. 9; xii. 1.

² -The god Shalman is good.

³ The notices of Jewish kings in the Assyrian inscriptions, compared with the received Bible chronology, show the following results.

ON THE MONUMENTS.

THE RECEIVED BIBLE
CHRONOLOGY.

Ahab, B.C. 854. Battle at Kar-kar.	Ahab reigned from B.C. 918-896.
Jehu, 842. Tribute.	Jehu 884-857.
Uzziah, 745-739. He was at war with Pul or Tiglath-pileser, in these years.	Uzziah 809-759.
Menahem, 738. Tribute.	Menahem 771-761.
Pekah, 714. Conquered by Tiglath-pileser.	Pekah 758-738.
Hosea, 728. Last year of his paying tribute to Tiglath-pileser.	Hosea 729-723.

722. Fall of Samaria. Fall of Samaria . . 722.

Keilinschriften, p. 299.

Assyrians. A fleet fitted out by these betrayers of their country was, however, dispersed by the Tyrians with a much smaller force, and Shalmaneser was compelled to restrict himself to a blockade of the brave island-capital, which resisted stoutly for five years, before the end of which the Assyrian throne had changed hands.¹

Meanwhile, a corps of the invading army was detached against Samaria, and at once invested it. But the haughty capital of Israel defended itself nobly. A terrible calamity, however, ere long overtook it. Its king, Hosea, was by some means taken prisoner and led off in chains to Assyria, where he remained till his death.² As Hosea the prophet had foretold, he disappeared like the foam on water,³ and was utterly cut off in a morning.⁴ But though thus without its king, the city continued its defence with a stout heart; three years passing before its fall.

While Tyre and Samaria were thus engaged in a mortal struggle with their terrible enemy, Shalmaneser died, in the year 722,⁵ whether by conspiracy or of disease is not clear. Sargon, his successor, already a man of about sixty, never speaks of himself as his son, though in the boasting style of Eastern kings he claims to be the descendant of "the three hundred and fifty kings of Assyria." But whether an adventurer or the legitimate heir to the empire, he was supremely fitted for the dignity. His great deeds filled the world for the next

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. xiv. 2. There are no annals of Shalmaneser in the Nineveh relics. The water by which the Tyrians supplied their wants, is said to have been got from a great spring which burst up through the salt-water bay.

² Lenormant thinks he had been summoned to Nineveh, to justify himself, and not venturing to disobey, had been seized and put in prison on his arrival. *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 354.

³ Hos. x. 7.

⁴ Hos. x. 15.

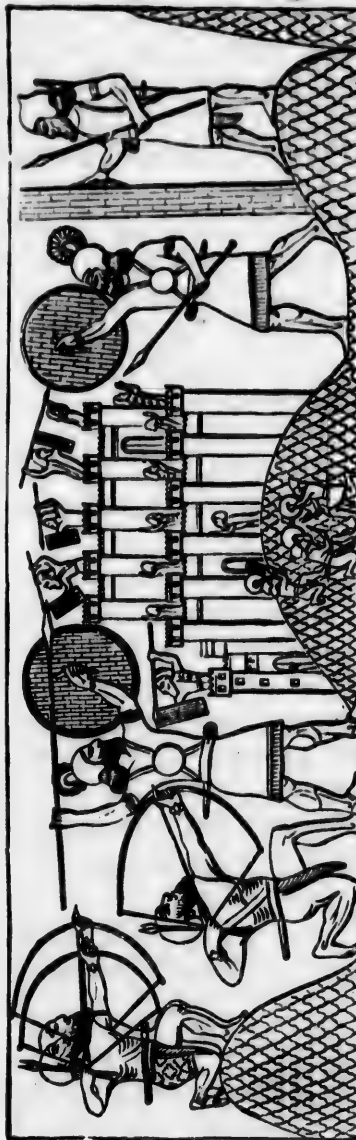
⁵ Smith, p. 91.

¹ He
705.

² Sch

³ Ibid

seventeen years.¹ Pushing on the operations against Tyre vigorously, he at last reduced it. But the siege of Samaria had in the meantime been so steadily and bitterly prosecuted, that the city fell in the first year of the new reign, B.C. 722. Fortunately we have Sargon's own account of it. "I besieged the city of Samaria," says he, "and took it. I carried off 27,280 of the citizens; I chose 50 chariots for myself from the whole number taken; all the other property of the people of the town I left for my servants to take. I appointed resident officers over them, and imposed on them the same tribute as had formerly been paid."² In the place of those taken into captivity I sent thither inhabitants of lands conquered by me, and imposed the tribute on them which I require from Assyrians."³ The Book of Kings strik-



SIEGE OF SAMARIA. KHORSABAD.

¹ He reigned from 722 to 705.

² Schrader, p. 158.

³ Ibid. p. 160.

ingly agrees with this statement.¹ The king of Assyria, it tells us, carried Israel to Assyria, and placed some of them in Halah, apparently on the upper course of the river Khabour, in North-western Mesopotamia, in a region known as "Gozan:" some in the "mountains of the Medes"²—the wild highland region on the east side of the Tigris, north of the Persian Gulf. "And the king of Assyria³ brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim and placed them in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel." A passage in the annals of the first year of Sargon, in which Samaria fell, seems almost an echo of these words. "Having overcome the king of Babylon I carried away — of the inhabitants with their goods, and settled them in the land of the Chatti,"⁴ that is, in Syro-Israel. In a cylinder inscription we further read, "Sargon who subdued the people of Thammud—an Arab race of Arabia Petrea—of Ibadid, Marsiman, and Chayapu, after slaying many, carried off the rest to the distant land of the House of Omri" (Samaria).⁵ In the annals of the seventh year⁶ we are told, moreover, "I subdued the inhabitants of Tasid, Ibadid, Marsiman, Chayapu, the people of distant Arba, the dwellers in the land of Bari, which even the learned have not known, and which had never brought their tribute to the king, my father,—and transplanted the survivors and settled them in the city of Samaria."⁷

The dates of these records show that the forced immigration of heathen foreigners continued through a series of years; the first having been, as stated in Kings, from Babylonia. Besides the places mentioned in the annals,

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 6.

² Schrader, p. 162.

³ Schrader, p. 163.

⁴ Sept.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁶ 2 Kings xvii. 24.

⁷ *z.c.* 715.

however, the Bible, as we have seen, adds others, and supplies details in several cases.¹ Thus, many, of both sexes, were brought to the Samaritan country from Cuthah, apparently a town of Central Babylonia;² from Ava, which is not identified; and from Hamath, the well-known Hittite-Phenician city on the Orontes. This ill-fated place, the annals inform us, was taken by Sargon in the second year of his reign, 721-20. Reserving for himself 200 chariots and 600 charioteers, he sent off the people to Samaria and other lands, replacing them by settlers carried thither from distant regions.³ Some immigrants also came from Sepharvaim or Sipparis, a city of Babylonia.

Thus the northern kingdom finally perished, amidst wild convulsions. Stripped of its inhabitants, the land threatened to relapse into a wilderness. Beasts of prey, and notably lions, increased so much as to become dangerous—a calamity which seemed to the superstitious foreign settlers scattered over it, a judgment on them for their not knowing how to worship the local god. At their humble request, therefore, an Israelite priest was sent from Assyria to give them the needful instruction, and to set apart whom he could as his colleagues. But heathenism is difficult to eradicate, and the only result was the addition of the God of Israel to the gods of the different nations now in the land. The men of Babylonia still “made Succoth Benoth,” which may have been images of the great Babylonian goddess, Zirbanit;⁴ or perhaps “small tents in which were contained images of female deities”; or possibly, the “tents” in which their daughters

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 24. ² Schrader, p. 164. ³ *Ibid.* pp. 165-6.

⁴ The meaning of Succoth Benoth is unknown. See Herzog, vol. xv. p. 253. *Bibel Lex.*, vol. v. p. 429. Rawlinson's *Great Monarchies*, vol. i. p. 134.

committed impurity in the service of the idols. The men of Cuth made Nergal—the “lion-god”—their national deity¹; those of Hamath worshipped Ashima, perhaps the Phenician goat-god Esmun;² the Avites, Nibhaz—apparently a dog-headed god—and Tartak, seemingly an embodiment of the evil principle. Still worse, the men of Sepharvaim, true to their ancestral worship of the sun-god, Baal, burned their children alive as sacrifices to Adrammelech and Annamelech, the male and female idols of Moloch worship. Judah was now all that remained of Israel, except a scattered remnant of the various tribes, who had escaped deportation, and lingered here and there in the north.³ Jerusalem, henceforth, became the centre of the true religion; on its fidelity the future history of the Church depended.

The ultimate fate of the Ten Tribes has been a subject of endless controversy. It seems beyond doubt, however, that they were ultimately lost—by intermarriage and the loss of tribal exclusiveness—among the nations to whose lands they were carried, in successive deportations, extending through many years. Some were settled in the districts already named; others were transported to Media, where we find them in the time of Tobit, at Rages, not far from Teheran in Persia.⁴ But while the Book of Kings indicates the regions to which the main stream of captives was turned, many were sent to widely distant parts of the vast Assyrian empire, as for instance to Hamath, in Northern Syria. Elam and

¹ Schrader, p. 167.

² This is the idea of the Jewish Rabbis, but Schrader says it has no foundation.

³ 2 Chron. xxx. 1-18; xxxiv. 6. Judah seems from this time to have assumed the name of Israel. 2 Chron. xxxv. 3.

⁴ Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 659. Tobit i. 14.

Babylonia became the home of multitudes. Many more were carried prisoners to Egypt by the Nile kings, and many went thither voluntarily, while there was hardly a land of the Mediterranean whither vast numbers had not been sold as slaves.¹

¹ In 1 Chron. v. 26 it is said that the Eastern tribes were carried off to Halah, and Khabour, and Hara ("the mountain land" of Media) and to the river of Gozan, and that they remained there at the time when Chronicles were compiled—that is, apparently in the days of Ezra, about B.C. 536, or nearly 250 years after their deportation. In this verse Pul and Tiglath-pileser are mentioned as distinct monarchs, but this Schrader thinks is, beyond doubt, a corruption of the text. *Keilinschriften*, p. 133. On the whole subject, see Keil, *Die Bücher d. Könige*, p. 323. Menant, *Babylone et la Chaldée*, p. 141. The subject of the fate of the Ten Tribes will be treated more fully in the next volume.





CHAPTER IX.

THE NORTHERN PROPHETS.

THE kingdom of the Ten Tribes had fallen, after a long anarchy of fifty years from the death of Jeroboam II. King after king had been murdered, and the throne had been seized at each new revolution by some fierce soldier chief, under whom matters went steadily from bad to worse. Rival factions had broken out as confusion and trouble increased. Old tribal jealousies had set neighbour against neighbour; Ephraim devoured Manasseh, and Manasseh devoured Ephraim.¹ Yet the nation, as we have seen, did not sink without a desperate struggle for life. Hosea speaks of a massacre at Beth-arbel, perhaps beyond Jordan,² perhaps at Irbid or Arbela, west of the Sea of Galilee, among the almost inaccessible hill caves in which, centuries later, the remnant of the people sought refuge from the Roman soldiery. The fortresses had been taken only after a fierce defence, in which many had preferred death to surrender. Mothers had thrown their children from the walls and flung themselves down to perish with them.³ But at last the bow of Israel had been finally broken in the great plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon,⁴ which had seen so many desperate struggles. The fall of Samaria after its heroic

¹ Isa. ix. 21. ² *Hitsig*. ³ Hos. x. 14. ⁴ Hos. i. 5.

resistance, had been followed by all the horrors of Eastern warfare. Children were dashed in pieces, and matrons ripped open; ¹ the maidens and surviving men led off into captivity. As the end drew near, anarchy added its terrors within the walls to those impending without. The rich broke out into wild revellings and debauchery, to drown their despair, ² and tumult and riot held carnival. The city on its surrender was forthwith levelled to the ground; its site made like "a heap of the field;" the stones of its proud palaces hurled down the hill side into the valley below; its very foundations laid bare; the gods in which it trusted carried off or beaten to pieces, and its spoil seized or burnt. ³ Palace and hovel perished together; ⁴ the places where its idol statues had stood were left desolate. ⁵

Such an appalling catastrophe had not come without abundant warning. Men like Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah had watched its approach and raised their voices, strong in the might of inspiration, to bring about a timely repentance, and thus save the guilty land. But besides them, there must have been many others, true to Jehovah, but now unknown, who strove in their own sphere that the evil might be averted. Some Psalms still remain which bear internal evidence of having been composed in the last years of Israel.

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel," wails out an unknown singer; ⁶

"Thou who leadest Joseph like a flock,

Thou who sitt'st enthroned between the Cherubim—shine forth!
Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,

¹ Hos. xiii. 16.

² Micah i. 6, 7.

³ Micah i. 7.

⁴ Gesenius, *Isaiah*, p. 829.

⁵ Amos vi. 11.

⁶ Ps. lxxx.

Wake up Thy mighty strength and come to save us.
O God, restore us, once again;
Cause Thy face to shine on us, and we shall be saved!

"O Jehovah, God of Hosts,
How long will Thine anger smoke at the prayer of Thy people?
Thou givest them bread of tears to eat;
Thou lettest them drink a full measure of tears;
Thou makest us a subject of dispute to our neighbours; (*who*
shall take our land—)

Our enemies mock us among themselves.
O God of Hosts, restore us once again,
Cause Thy face to shine on us, and we shall be saved!

"Thou broughtest out a vine from Egypt;
Thou didst drive out the heathen, and planted it.
Thou didst make clear room for it;
It took deep root and filled the land.
The hills were covered with its shade;
Its branches were like cedars of God.
It stretched its boughs to the Sea,
Its shoots to the Great River.¹
Why hast Thou broken down the walls round it,
That all wanderers by the way can pluck it?
The boar² from the forest roots it up;
The wild brood of the field make it their pasture!

"O God of Hosts, turn back, even now;
Look down from heaven, and behold,
And come to this Vine;—
The stock which Thy right hand has planted;
The sapling³ which Thou didst choose for Thyself!

¹ The hills of the south—the cedars of the north—the sea on the west—the Euphrates on the east. So widely had it spread.

² Assyria.

³ Or, Son. So *Gesenius*, *Hitzig*, *Delitzsch* and others. "Son" was used by the Hebrews, from the simplicity and poverty of their language, in many ways strange to us now. Hence, in the A.V. it is translated, Gen. xxxii. 15, colts; xlix. 22, bough; Job iv. 11, whelps; v. 7, sparks; Ps. lxxx. 15, branch; Isai. xxi. 10, corn; Lam. i. 16, arrows.

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It is burnt with fire; it is rooted up;
 It is destroyed at the rebuke of Thy countenance!
 Let Thy right hand be on (Israel); the man of Thy right hand;¹
 The Son of man² whom Thou didst choose for Thyself!
 Then, (thus kept true), we shall not turn from Thee again;
 Thus quickened anew to life, we shall call on Thy name!
 O Jehovah, God of Hosts, restore us once again;
 Cause Thy face to shine on us, and we shall be saved."³

But not only had such exquisitely conceived laments been heard in the darkening hours of the northern kingdom; prophets had striven to rouse its people to reflection. The great Isaiah, who was in the prime of his life when Samaria fell, sent a stern warning from Jerusalem to his brethren of Israel.

"Woe to (Samaria), the proud crown⁴ of the drunkards of Ephraim! Woe to the garland⁴ on the head of the fruitful valley of those struck down by wine. The crown⁴—their fairest ornament—now fading away! Behold a strong and mighty one,⁵ sent from Jehovah—like a storm of hail, like a destroying storm, like a flood of mighty overflowing waters—shall dash it fiercely to the ground! The proud crown⁴ of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden under foot! The fading flower-crown on the head of the fruitful valley!

"Ephraim's fairest ornament shall be to the foe like the (tempting) early fig, already ripe before the harvest⁶—which he who sees plucks at once, and swallows as soon as it is in his hand!"⁷

¹ The vine was planted by God's right hand, ver. 16.

² The race. ³ *Kay. Hitzig. Ewald. Olshausen. Moll.*

⁴ Samaria crowns its hill like a garland on the brow of one at a feast. Wisdom ii. 7, 8.

⁵ The king of Assyria.

⁶ The usual time of fig harvest is August, but some ripen in special cases, even six weeks earlier. *Gesenius*. An early fig was a special delicacy. Hos. ix. 10. Mic. vii. 1. Nah. iii. 12. Jer. xxiv. 2.

⁷ Isa. xxviii. 1-4.

But Hosea, during his long public career of at least sixty years,¹ was especially the prophet of the sinking kingdom. His first appeals date from the closing reign of the great Jeroboam II., and were followed at intervals, till after Samaria had perished, by the others which make up his "Prophecies." Obscurely brief, he is often hard to understand; but there is an earnestness in his denunciations and a tenderness in his pathos that speak at once of his righteous indignation and gentle sympathy. It has been much disputed whether the opening chapters are an allegory or to be taken literally.² If the former, the prophet's wife, who turns to impurity, is Israel,—chosen by God as His earthly bride, but falling into idolatry and sin,—and her children are the nation which had sprung from her. If the latter, Hosea had shared in the misery of the land by marrying one who had turned aside to the vices so common. He had fondly loved her and she had borne him two sons and a daughter, but she had then left him, and been carried off as a slave, after falling into gross licentiousness. Eichhorn thinks the names of the children mark the advancing doom of the kingdom—Jezreel, "God will punish;" Lo Ruhamah, "who finds no more pity;" and Lo Ammi, "no more my people."³ But with a touching love, the prophet tells us that, though Israel be thus disinherited, it will not be so for

¹ The title says that he prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jeroboam II., Ahaz and Hezekiah. But from Jeroboam's death to that of Ahaz was fifty-eight years. His latest prophecy is not apparently later than the fourth or fifth year of Hezekiah. Thus the few chapters preserved of his utterances are all that the Holy Ghost has pleased to hand down from a ministry of over sixty years.

² Eichhorn holds strongly to the literal interpretation, Hitzig to the allegorical.

³ Eichhorn, *Die Propheten*, vol. i. p. 73.

ever. In the end it will return to God, and He will again be the Guardian of the land, and make His people glad. The glow of evening red, as the Book closes, fore-casts the bright dawn of a glorious Messianic day.

An abstract of Hosea's different prophecies is the best commentary on the history of the times. They open by the announcement that the blood so ruthlessly and lavishly shed by Jehu, will be avenged by the destruction of the House of Israel itself in a terrible battle in the plain of Jezreel, which had witnessed his pitiless ferocity.¹ God will endure the sinful nation no longer, and cannot possibly forgive it. Judah will be spared as not equally guilty, but God's power, not her armies, will save her.² He cannot pity Israel, for, unlike Judah, it is no longer His people.³ But a better time is coming—the Messianic—when Judah and Israel shall unite under one head, of the race of David,⁴ and fill the land. God will then call them Ammi, "my people;" and Ruhamah, "pitied."⁵

Turning from this fond vision of a happy future, Hosea now resumes his warnings. Israel must lay aside her sins lest God cast her out of the land. She has gone after idols which, as she thinks, have bestowed the material prosperity that marked Jeroboam's reign.⁶ But when God visits her in anger she will return to Him. She had ascribed her worldly blessings—her bread and water, her wool and flax, her oil and wines—to Baal,

¹ Hosea i. 4. In ver. 5 the destruction of the military power of Israel is expressed in the phrase, "I will break the bow of Israel." The bow and arrows held the front place in warfare from the earliest antiquity till the discovery of gunpowder, in all nations except the few which relied on close combat with the sword. Pusey thinks that Hosea lived to see this prediction fulfilled in the battle with Shalmaneser at Beth-arbel. Hosea x. 14.

² Hosea ii. 7.

³ *Ibid.* ii. 8, 9.

⁴ *Ibid.* iii. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.* ii. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.* ver. 5.

but God will take them from her, and then she will see that they were not from Baal but from Jehovah.¹ Her joy will be turned to sorrow; there will be an end to her idol feasts, new moons, sabbaths, and great religious assemblies; her rich vines and fig-trees, the symbols of her prosperity, will be trampled under foot by enemies.² She will be punished for going after the Baals and forgetting Jehovah.³ But mercy will still temper justice. Carried off from her own land, but still followed by prophets, the Valley of Trouble⁴ will be a door of hope—affliction will reform her. She will again call God her husband,⁵ and He will make a covenant with her—the lower creatures joining in it—that, if she keep thus faithful, war will cease in the land and she will “lie down safely.” He will betroth her to Himself for ever. The tenderness of the prophet’s words in dilating on this is touching in the extreme. The very heavens will plead for the penitent that they may yield her once more their blessing, and God will fill them with the dew and rain, so long withheld, and these will feed the corn and wine and oil, and the cry of Jezreel—that is of Israel—will thus be answered. It will be His people and He will be its God.⁶

In chapter iii. the popular idolatry is again typified as impurity. Israel, forsaken by its Divine protector, because it has first forsaken Him, is symbolized by a

¹ Hosea ii. 10.

² Ver. 12.

³ Ver. 13. Verse 9 shows that the women of Israel decked themselves in their best at the licentious worship of the Baals, putting on their ear-rings (the same word is used for nose-rings) and their jewels, and burned incense to the idols.

⁴ Achor, lit. “troubling.”

⁵ Ver. 16. Ishi, lit. “my husband,” or rather “my man.” The very word “Baal” will not henceforth be heard. God will not have it, even if used towards Himself as meaning “my Lord.”

⁶ Ver. 23.

woman beloved of her husband, but now forsaken by him, for her manifold sins. Yet a conditional marriage contract is renewed with her, its final ratification depending on the full proof of her penitence during a lengthened trial. If Israel remained true to Jehovah during its exile, when far from its idols, He would bring it back and restore it under the rule of the House of David.¹ The loss of its independence; its king and court; its accustomed sacrifices; its ephod, abused to superstitious ends; its calves and idols, and even its house-gods,² consulted for oracles, would wake a yearning to return to God, and to unite with Judah.

Chapter iv. is a distinct address. The prophet fiercely denounces the wickedness and idolatry of the nation, and foretells their terrible punishment. He has pictured the exhaustless love of God towards them by the most striking images; love which no unfaithfulness could extinguish; love waiting to show its tenderness on the first sign of their penitence. Now, however, he has to proclaim their indictment, and the very depth of his sympathy makes his indignation at their sin and folly the deeper.

"Hear Jehovah's word,"³ says he, "ye sons of Israel. He has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no truth, there is no goodness, no knowledge of God among them! They are perjurers, they lie, they murder and steal, and are adulterers; they have broken through all bounds, 'till one stream of murdered men's blood touches another! Nature itself is in mourning for guilt so great; the men of the land fade away; the very wild beasts of the fields, and the birds of the air, and fish of the sea languish (in the drought and sorrow with which God has smitten you). Yet neither prophet nor heavenly voice

¹ Hosea iii. 1-5.

² Teraphim.

³ Hosea iv. 1.

⁴ Ewald says, "they break into houses" to rob and kill.

must reprove you; instead of that, you blame your priests, and contend with them.¹ But so much the more certain is your universal destruction. The people shall stumble, as it were in the day, and the dumb prophet that does not reprove you will stumble in the night, and the whole mother-land shall perish. Jehovah has said it! 'My people,' says God, 'perish for lack of knowledge of Me!' Because ye, O priests, have made light of knowledge and have not upheld My honour, I will degrade you from being My priests; as ye have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children! The greater you have grown in number, wealth and standing, the more you have sinned; your greatness, therefore, shall I turn to shame. You grow rich on the sins of the people; you are eager to have them do wrong, (for their sin-offerings and penance-gifts are so much the more). People and priest are thus alike guilty; and I shall therefore punish them equally for their sins! They will eat and not be satisfied; give themselves to impurity, but not increase; because they have left off to take heed to Jehovah!''²

The sins of the priests lead astray the people, who copy their example.

"Impurity, wine,⁴ and strong drink dull the understanding of all; My people consult wooden images as oracles; they make their staff prophecy to them.⁵ Their love for idolatry and its foul license has led them astray; they have been faithless to God, their husband, and have forsaken Him. They sacrifice on the mountain tops; they burn incense upon the hills, under the oaks, and poplars, and elms of their heathen groves, because they like the thick shade with its impurities. Your daughters, seduced by a worship so gross, commit fornication; your daughters-in-law, adultery. Yet I would fain punish neither. Young and foolish, they are less guilty than the priests, for *they* go aside with the vile women of Astarte, and offer sacrifices with the temple-harlots, and the thoughtless women are thus led astray! If thou, Israel,

¹ The priest was the judge, in God's name, in many things.

² Hosea iv. 6.

³ *Ibid.* iv. 10.

⁴ *Ibid.* iv. 11-19.

⁵ They used staves with different magic inscriptions on them, or staves with different signs, and divined by them. Ezek. xxi. 21.

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wilt thus commit fornication, oh, do not thou, Judah, at least, defile thyself! Go not over the border to Gilgal; go not up to Beth-aven,¹ and swear not by the calves. As Jehovah liveth, thus untrue to Him are you all, in heart! Israel has, indeed, become towards her God like a wild and furious heifer, but Jehovah will soon bate her pride and lead her, like a weak sheep, to the wilderness, to feed there! Ephraim is in love with his idols—leave him alone! When they have drunk till wine loses its relish they give themselves up to impurity; their rulers delight in such shameful orgies; but the storm-wind of My wrath will bear them away on its wings, and they will blush at these shameless feasts and offerings, followed by such debauchery.”

With chapter v. a new address begins; like the preceding, a stern indictment.

“Hear ye this,² ye priests; mark, thou House of Israel; listen O House of the King, for this indictment is against you! Instead of being protectors and upholders of the land, ye priests, and ye courtiers, have been like nets and gins for the people—like nets and gins spread on Mispah of Gilead and on Tabor in Esdraelon! You have busied yourselves with multiplied sacrifices, ye revolvers! But I will punish you all! I know Ephraim, and Israel is naked before me. At this very time, Ephraim, thou art committing fornication with idols, and Israel is defiled with its sins. Your doings keep you from returning to your God; for the spirit of impurity is in your midst. You know not Jehovah! Jehovah, the Pride of Israel, witnesses against you, therefore, to your face. Israel and Ephraim fall by their iniquity; and Judah, also, shall fall with them!³ Israel will one day come to seek Jehovah, with sheep and oxen for sacrifices; but they will not find Him. He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have been unfaithful to Him; they have begotten alien children.⁴ Now

¹ Beth-el = God's House, changed to Beth-aven = House of Idols, some think of Beth-on = the House of the Sun. ² Hosea v. 1-7.

³ Their special sin in this case is not mentioned. It was perhaps a proposed alliance with Assyria or Egypt.

⁴ Their intercourse with idols has corrupted the faith of their households.

shall the moon-god whom they worship destroy them and their land!¹

Hosea seems, as he warms in his address, to see the punishment threatened, already approaching. Judah must warn Israel, and Israel, Judah.

"Blow the trumpet in Gibeah;² blow the loud trumpet in Ramah; cry aloud from Bethel, now the House of Idols, in thy hinder borders, O Benjamin!³ Ephraim shall be a wilderness in the day of vengeance; among the tribes of Israel have I made known what will surely be. Judah's princes, also; those that by joining in Ephraim's idolatries, move back as it were the landmark of Jehovah;⁴ on them will I pour out my fury like water!

"Ephraim is even now sorely oppressed; it is afflicted with judgment, because it chose to follow the commandment of Jeroboam⁵ instead of Mine. Assyria, My instrument, has already wasted its borders.⁶ I have been as a moth consuming it, and like a gnawing worm to Judah—to lead them to seek Me in whom alone is their hope. But, instead of this, when Ephraim saw his feebleness and Judah his wound, Ephraim sent an embassy to the Assyrian, and Judah sent to the king fierce, revengeful;⁷ but he could not cure you, he could not heal your wounds. Now, shall I no longer be like a moth to Ephraim, but like a lion. Now shall I no longer be like a gnawing worm to Judah, but like a fierce

¹ *Hitzig*. Ewald thinks this refers to the baleful influence attached at times to the new moon. ² Hosea v. 8-vi. 3.

³ "The foe is behind thee." *Hitzig*. *Keil*.

⁴ Deut. xxvii. 17. The idea seems to be that the encroachments of northern heathenism have taken away from Jehovah the land formerly His.

⁵ To worship the calves.

⁶ Assyria had desolated Gilead and Upper Galilee in the days of Tiglath-pileser. See p. 233. Before him, Shalmaneser II., in his attack on the kingdom of Damascus, had wasted the Hauran, which had been Jewish territory (p. 166); and Binnirari also had doubtless done much harm in his campaigns (p. 179).

⁷ *Vulg.*, Revenger. *Others*, fierce. *Ewald*, the Great King, Assyria.

young lion. Since slight punishment will not do, I must increase it; I, even I, Jehovah, will tear them in pieces and go away; I will carry off the prey and no man will rescue it from Me; I will go away from them to My own place, till they repent and seek My face. In their hour of need they will turn to Me, and eagerly cry: 'Up,¹ let us go back to Jehovah; for, as He has torn, so, He only can heal us; as He has smitten, He only can bind up our wounds! The shortest time² is enough for Him to restore us; on the third day we will rise from our present death and stand strong in His sight. Let us fear Jehovah; let us show Him reverence;³ then will His coming forth on our behalf be sure and glorious as the red of morning—refreshing and blessed as the rain, the latter rain, that waters the thirsty earth!'"

The impression made by the prophet's words was unfortunately only passing, and his sorrow breaks out, perhaps on a future occasion, in a touching lament.

"O Ephraim, what shall I do with thee!⁴ O Judah, what shall I do with thee! Your goodness is like morning clouds, or like early vanishing dew! I have hewn you as men hew stones, by the judgments that have followed the words of My prophets; I have threatened you with death by the words of My mouth. Now must My final judgment burst forth resistless as the light. I delight in deeds of mercy, rather than the sacrifice of beasts! In the knowledge of God more than in burnt-offerings! But you break my covenant as if it were a mere human law; in your own land you have been faithless to Me! Gilead is a city of evil-doers, foot-printed with blood; gangs of priests, lurking for men, like robbers, murder them on the way to Shechem—such wickedness do they commit! I see horrible things in Israel, Ephraim goes after foulness; Israel is defiled; even Judah sows the seed of its future punishment."⁵

No details are given in the Historical Books, of the terrible years immediately after the death of Jeroboam II., when anarchy, weakness in the temporary rulers, the

¹ Hosea vi. 1.

² Lit. two days.

³ Eichhorn.

⁴ Hosea vi. 4-11.

⁵ Eichhorn.

haughtiness of the great, the tumult of factions, and the miseries of the people were bringing the nation to ruin. We only know that kings were raised to the throne to be presently murdered by rivals. Impotent at home, each new ruler sought strength by foreign alliances, if but to deprecate the anger of powers which he could not resist. The throne was the slave of the dominant army and nobles; its occupant had to flatter and propitiate them to keep his place or to save his life. The seventh chapter of our prophet gives us glimpses of this state of things.

"When I would have turned the captivity of my people; when I would have healed Israel¹—then were seen the misdeeds of Ephraim and the wickedness of Samaria! They are given to treachery; thieves break into the houses; robbers plunder in the streets. They never have it in their thoughts that I, Jehovah, note their iniquity. But now their sins have grown so great that they are like witnesses testifying against them; witnesses that have come before my face demanding vengeance. The chief men make the puppet king partner in their revels, the princes force him to uphold their lies. They are all adulterers; they glow with lust as the fiery oven heated by the baker, when he ceases to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough till it rises; they let their passions rest only so long as is needed to rekindle them more fiercely than ever.

"On the yearly birthfeast of our king² the princes drink themselves to a fever heat with wine; and the king goes with these revellers, hand in hand. Their heart glows like an oven in their treachery; through the night their plot sleeps—as does the baker's furnace—in the morning it burns forth like a flaming fire. Then they burn like the heated oven, and consume their rulers; they destroy all their kings without one among them calling upon Me!

"Ephraim has joined fellowship with the heathen, and is scorched already, like a cake unturned in the oven. Foreign peoples

¹ Hosea vii. 1 ff.

² Proof that Hosea belonged to the northern kingdom.

devour his strength;¹ yet he does not note it; he is growing old and weak—grey hairs show here and there on him, yet he does not mark it. I, once the Pride of Israel, witness against him to his face, yet he does not turn to his God, Jehovah; in all his weakness he does not seek Him!

"Ephraim has become like a simple foolish dove; he calls on Egypt for help; he turns himself to Assyria. But, turn whither he will, I will spread My net over him; I will bring him down like birds of the air into its trammels; I will punish him as I have threatened to his tribes! Woe to them! that they have fled away from Me; destruction on them! that they have been faithless to Me! I would fain have redeemed them from their sorrows, but they only speak lies against Me. They have not cried to Me from their hearts, but have howled on their beds for the loss of their corn and wine, and then, slighting Me, have turned them to other gods! It was I who in old times strengthened their arm, yet they think only evil against Me! They do not raise their thoughts upwards to Me; they pretend to do so, but are like a deceitful bow, whose arrow promises what its performance only mocks. Their princes will fall by the sword of Assyria; for the hypocrisy of their tongues towards Me they will be mocked in Egypt, whose favour they seek."²

In his earlier utterances Hosea had hinted at the foe destined to carry off Israel, but he distinctly names Assyria in his later appeals, as time disclosed more clearly the purposes of Providence. Now, in the eighth chapter,

¹ By the tribute paid them.

² The fearless denunciations of the great by Hosea, Isaiah and other prophets, finds a striking counterpart in the words of a Turkish dervish, quoted by Gesenius, *Isaia*, vol. i. p. 169: "If you ask who are the robbers and knaves in the land: I tell you they are the officers of government. But the high judges are still more unrighteous than these. As God liveth, they have brought the empire to ruin by their corruption! Fish stink, says the proverb, first, at the head! The cause of public decay may be known by looking, in the same way, at our great men!" Like this Mahometan dervish, the prophets were in reality the undaunted preachers of the day. See p. 271.

he sees the invasion and captivity near. Jehovah commands him to sound the alarm :

"Set the trumpet to your mouth.¹ Doom comes on Israel, the people of Jehovah, swift as an eagle! because they have broken My covenant and been faithless to My Law.

"In that day they shall cry to Me, 'My God, we know Thee; we are Thy people.' But I shall answer: 'Israel has despised the right; pursue him, O enemy!'

"They set up kings without asking My pleasure; they set up princes whom I do not know; their silver and gold they have made into idols, as if to secure their destruction!

"Thy calf, O Samaria, is an abomination to Me; My anger burns against them that worship it. How long will they busy



ASSYRIAN SOLDIERS SLAYING OFF AND DESTROYING AN IDOL.

themselves with such uncleanness? for this calf is the work of Israel; the founder has made it; it is no god. The calf of Samaria will be split up into faggots for the fire! They have sown the wind and will reap the storm. A worthless idolatry can wake only worthless hopes. It is a seed that bears no stalk; its blossom can yield no meal; and if it did, the invader will consume it. Israel shall surely be swallowed up; they are already among the nations like a thing² which no one esteems.

¹ Hosea viii. 1 ff.

² The word is generally translated "vessel" in the A. V., but also—a jewel, an instrument, a thing, a weapon, etc.

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For they are sending embassies to Assyria; acting alone, like the wild ass, which cannot be bound. Ephraim is trying to hire lovers (political support); but if they thus hire the heathen, I will soon bring the nations against them, and they will regret the tribute they have to pay to Assyria, the King of Princes.

Ephraim has increased the number of his strange altars, and these altars will bring him to ruin. Though I have written My Law¹ so minutely, he acts as if it did not concern him. They eat the raw flesh which they offer;² but Jehovah has no pleasure in sacrifices like these. He will soon bring their evil deeds to their mind, and punish their sins. They shall come anew to a land of oppression like Egypt. Israel has forgotten Me, his Maker, and has built himself strong castle-palaces. Even Judah has distrusted My protection and built herself fortified towns, but I will send fire into their cities; fire that will burn up their strongholds."

The people of the northern kingdom had their great festival of harvest, at which they gave tithes from their threshing-floors to the idol-priests, and held religious rejoicings. But they had little reason for such jubilation.

"Lead up no joyful dances, O Israel,³ like the nations around, for thou art unfaithful and forsakest thy God; thou hast loved to pay tithes to thy idols on the threshing-floors heaped with corn. But you⁴ shall not eat of the corn or drink of the wine-press; the new wine will mock your hope; for you will not remain in Jehovah's land; Ephraim will return to bondage like that of Egypt, and eat unclean food⁵ in Assyria. There, you will pour out no more wine offerings to Jehovah, your sacrifices will not be pleasing to Him; the flour you eat will be like the bread of mourners; to taste it will be to defile yourselves.⁶ Your bread

¹ The Mosaic law was thus perfectly known in those days.

² Contrary to Exod. xii. 9. ³ Hosea ix. 1.

⁴ The Hebrew pronouns change here from the second person sing. to the third person plur. I have substituted the second person plur., as more in harmony with English usage.

⁵ Another allusion to the Levitical law.

⁶ Deut. xxvi. 14. Jer. xvi. 7 (marg.). Ezek. xxiv. 17.

will serve only to stay your hunger; Jehovah will not allow it to come into His House as an offering. What will ye do then when your yearly feasts come round? What will ye do in your holy festivals? What, in the days of the feasts of Jehovah? For were the nation once forth from their ruined land, their Egypt-like oppressor will hold them fast; his land, like Memphis, with its thousand graves, will bury them!¹ Thistles will inherit their mansions adorned with silver! nettles will grow in their homes!

“The days of visitation are coming! the days of vengeance approach! Then Israel will see whether the prophet is a dreamer, the inspired man crazed or mad! The evil days come for the greatness of thy guilt; for thy bitter persecution of God’s servants. Ephraim seeks oracles other than Jehovah; as for His prophet—the net of the fowler is spread by them in all his ways; they rage against him even in the house of his God.² They have sinned as terribly as they of Gibeah³ once, when Benjamin was well-nigh destroyed for its guilt; therefore God must needs punish their evil deeds—must visit them for their transgressions.”

The tender heart of the prophet, filled with an intense love for his people, pauses here in his accusations and breaks out in a touching retrospect of their history. The love of God to them has been shown from of old, and He cannot leave them even now, if they will only return to Him at the eleventh hour. Jehovah speaking through Hosea’s lips tells them—

“Israel,⁴ of old, was to Me like grapes in the wilderness to a faint and thirsty wanderer; I looked lovingly on your fathers as one looks on the first ripe figs in spring⁵—the sweetest and best of all. But their goodness soon passed away, for when they came

¹ This seems to be the sense; but the prophet may also allude to the multitudes of Jews who were carried off by the slave dealers to Egypt.

² They would not listen to his warnings, but turned fiercely against him. ³ Judges xix. ⁴ Hosea ix. 10 ff.

⁵ This is illustrated by Isai. xxviii. 4, where the text should be

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to the land of Baal-peor they gave themselves up to that shameful god; they became abominable like the idol they loved, and now they continue in their evil ways.

"Ephraim—its might will fly away like a bird; there shall be no births, no bearing in the womb, no conception. If they bring up their sons to manhood, I will make them childless, so that men shall fail; yea, it shall be woe with them when I leave them! Why, indeed, should they have children, for I see in my vision as if Ephraim were exposing his children for a prey, and bringing them forth to the murderer¹ by his course towards God. Give them, O Jehovah; what wilt Thou give them? Give them a childless womb and dry breasts! Gilgal is the special scene of their wickedness; there have they made themselves hateful to me. For their wickedness I will drive them out of Canaan, My house. I will love them no more; all their princes are rebellious against Me. Ephraim is like a tree struck by lightning; its root is dried up; it will bear no fruit; but if it should, I will destroy the loved fruit of the womb.

read, "as the early figs, *before the summer.*" The "early figs" (Heb. "Bikkurah") form on the wood of the preceding year, and show themselves even before the leaves open in spring. They are generally ripe by the end of June, but in favoured positions much earlier. Dr. Otto Delitzsch in *Riehm*. Tristram has seen the fruit-buds of the fig rapidly swelling as early as the end of February, though the leaves did not unfold for a month later. *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 351. The fig harvest is in August; but along the shores of the Sea of Galilee Josephus tells us the ripe fruit could be plucked for ten months in the year. *Bell. Jud.*, III. x. 8.

¹ Sept. The murderer—the Assyrian.

Eichhorn translates the two lines—

"O Ephraim, like yon closely-built Tyre,

I see thee lead forth thy sons to the murderer."

Perhaps an allusion to the human sacrifices of Tyre, which, like Ephraim, worshipped Baal.

Hitzig translates them: "Ephraim, as I saw it (in a vision) is a young palm, set in the open pastures—unprotected—so that the flocks and herds devour her leaves and destroy her. She, by her course, is giving her children to the destroyer." He supposes the prophet speaking.

"My God has cast them away because they hearken not to Him; for this shall they be scattered among the nations."

The tenth chapter forms the opening of a new discourse delivered at another time, but still bearing on the great theme—the corruption of Israel and its imminent punishment.

"Israel (under Jeroboam II.) grew to be a luxuriant vine, hanging rich with fruit; but the more its fruit, and the greater its prosperity, the more its altars to false gods; the richer the land, the richer its stately idols. Their heart is divided between them and God; they are ready for punishment. God Himself will break down their altars, and smite in pieces their images.

"Then will they say, 'Jehovah is now no more our King, because we did not fear Him; He is now not our King, but our enemy; what can He help us?'"

No wonder that Jehovah has thus forsaken them.

"They talk empty words, they swear false oaths, they make treaties to pay tribute,¹ without intending to keep them; like the rank and poisonous poppy² in the furrows of the field, so spring up the seeds of vengeance."

This vengeance will be, that Assyria will not only impoverish the land by the impost it demands, but will carry off even the calves in which Israel trusted for help.

"Grieve,³ O ye inhabitants of Samaria, for the calf of Bethaven in which ye trusted; the people will lament its loss, the black-robed⁴ priests will tremble with sorrow for it, for this their glory will be carried away from them!⁵ It will be carried off

¹ Hosea x. 1 ff.

² *Hitzig.*

³ Menahem's engagement to pay tribute to Assyria. 2 Kings xvi. 7; xvii. 3.

⁴ Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 447.

⁵ Hosea x. 5. ⁶ *Kemarim*. "Black-robed" idol priests. The word occurs also in 2 Kings xxiii. 5; Zeph. i. 4. The verb from which it is derived is translated "black" in Lam. v. 10.

⁷ Plural in the Hebrew, but the singular is used in the rest of the verse.

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to Assyria as a present to the warlike king. Shame will seize Ephraim, and Israel will blush for the counsel it followed. Samaria must perish; her king will vanish like a chip carried off by the rushing stream; the high places of abomination will be laid waste—the scenes of the guilt of Israel! The thorn and the thistle will grow over their ruined altars. In that day they will cry to the mountains, ‘Cover us!’ and to the hills, ‘Fall on us!’

“Thou hast sinned worse, O Israel, than they once did in Gibeah,¹ yet at that time thou didst escape; the war did not then bring destruction on thee. But now I will chastise thee in My wrath; I will gather against thee strange nations, and send thee bound into captivity with thy two idol calves.”

A new train of thought is now begun. The victories under Jeroboam II. are compared to the threshing of corn by cattle on the threshing-floors.

“Ephraim is a cow well trained for the threshing-floor, she had pleasure in treading out the corn; but I will lay a yoke on her fair neck; I will make her do slavish field work; Judah shall have to plough; Jacob-Israel, to break the clods.² If you wish to see better days, sow for yourselves righteousness; ye shall then reap mercy. Break up your fallow-ground and sow it thus, for it is high time to seek after Jehovah, that He may come and rain down blessing upon you.”

But they would not listen.

“Instead of doing this ye have ploughed-in seed of wickedness, and have reaped iniquity and eaten its bitter fruit. Because thou hast trusted in thy chariots³ and in the number of thy mighty men, the shout of war shall rise against thy tribes, and all thy strong places shall be destroyed, as Shalman laid waste Beth-arbel in the day of battle,⁴ when the mother was

¹ Judges xix.

² They will be reduced to slavery.

³ *Eichhorn* and *Ewald*, after *Sept.*

⁴ Beth-arbel is thought by Pusey to have been in the plains of Esdraelon, but it is apparently the place of that name near Pella, east of the Jordan. Shalmaneser III., of Assyria (781-772),

dashed from the walls after her children! Such things will your idolatries at Bethel bring upon you; before you dream of it the king of Israel shall utterly perish."

But denunciation and sternness are alien to the heart of Jehovah. He cannot utterly destroy Israel, which he loved of old, and still loves with an inextinguishable pity, notwithstanding all its sins. He will yet show mercy on them and compassionate their sorrows.

"When Israel was a child,¹ says God, I loved him and called him out of Egypt to be My son. But now, the more I call him by My prophets, the farther he wanders from Me. They offer sacrifices to Baal; incense to their graven images.

"Yet I, even I, taught Israel his first steps; I nursed him in My arms. But he did not care to know that it was I who healed and made him strong.² After his Egyptian slavery, I led him through the wilderness with gentle bands, with bands of love: I softly raised them from off his mouth³ and tenderly laid food before him. He shall not indeed return to Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king. Because, after they had forsaken Me, they refused to return. The sword shall whirl in his cities, it shall hew down his chief men and devour and consume the multitude, because of the course they have followed. For my people are bent on backsliding from Me; the prophets

marched against the cedar district of Lebanon in 775 and against Damascus in 773, and might on either of these campaigns have swooped down on the lands east of the Jordan. But there was also in Hosea's day, a King Salman, of Moab, tributary to Pul of Assyria. Crushed by Jeroboam II. he may very probably have risen in revolt after the death of that king and overrun Gilead and Bashan, destroying Beth-arbel among other places. The incident would in this case have been the more impressive to the prophet's audience from having happened so recently. Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, pp. 282-4. Oliphant's *Land of Gilead*, p. 106.

¹ Hosea xi.

² Eichhorn.

³ Hosea reverts to the common figure of an ox used in the field.

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have called them to a nobler life, but they will make no effort after it.

"Yet, how shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I abandon thee, O Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah?¹ How shall I destroy thee like Zeboim?¹ My heart within Me is turned towards thee; My pity is awakened. I will not carry out the heat of My wrath, I will not utterly destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man. I, who dwell in the midst of thee, am holy, and I will not enter² into your city, to overthrow it for ever."

Israel would not be finally destroyed, but sent into captivity, for their good, that God might hereafter bring them back.

"They shall, one day, walk after Jehovah when He calls them with a great voice like that of a lion; for with such a loud sounding voice He shall call them. Then will His sons, once more faithful, hasten from the west; hasten, swift as a bird, from Egypt, and as a swift dove from Assyria, and I will again place them in their homes. Jehovah hath said it!"

The twelfth chapter presents us with another of Hosea's orations. Like some of the preceding it takes the form of sad and faithful reproof.

"Ephraim has compassed me about with lies;³ the House of Israel has compassed me with deceit: Judah is ever inconsistent towards God; towards the Holy One, who fulfils His threatenings.⁴ Ephraim runs after the wind and chases the storm; day by day his falsehood and guile increase. He makes treaties with Assyria, and at the same moment sends oil⁵ by his embassies,

¹ Two of the cities of the plain destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. *Hosea must have known the record in Genesis.*

² "Come in fury." *Ewald. Keil. Wünsche.*

³ Hosea xi. 12 ff.

⁴ *Hitzig. Eichhorn.*

⁵ Oil was the most highly esteemed product of the land and thus worthy to be sent to the king of Egypt. No doubt a large quantity was forwarded.



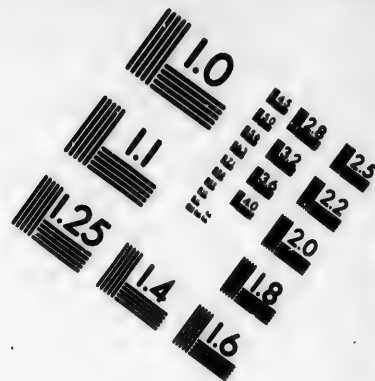
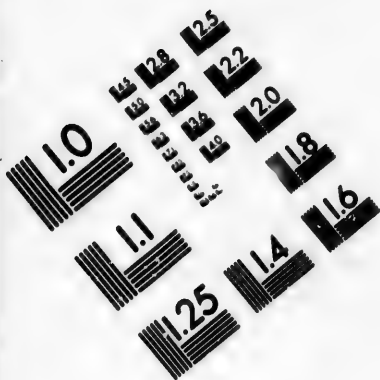
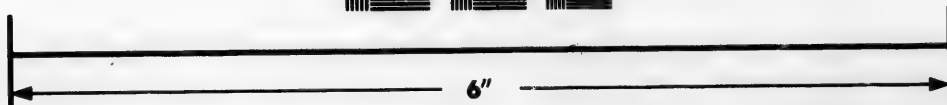
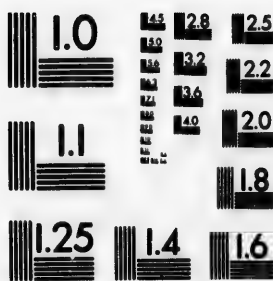


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as a gift to the king of Egypt.¹ Jehovah has a controversy² also with Judah. He will visit Jacob³ according to his deeds; He will punish him according to his doings. In the womb he held his brother's heel; in his manhood he strove with God, yea, he strove with the angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication to him. He, (God) will be found of us at Bethel, and there will He speak with us; He, Jehovah, the God of Hosts, Jehovah is His name. Turn thou, therefore, O Jacob, to thy God; practise mercy and right, and cleave ever to thy God!

The wealth of Phenicia had been gained by trade, but its people had a terrible name for lying and unfairness in their dealing. They could therefore be justly accused and deserved to suffer. Israel in Jeroboam II.'s day had also risen to wealth and power, but they maintained that their prosperity was from God and drew with it no reproach.

"The Canaanite deals with false balances:⁴ he delights in roguery. But Ephraim boasts, as compared with him, that he, also, 'has grown rich and great, and has gained treasure; but all his riches have been gained honestly, without guilt which might bring punishment after.'"

Jehovah challenges this; and though they say they are not guilty, will surely punish them.

"Yet I, Jehovah, whom thou slightest, thy God since thou leatest Egypt ages ago, will send thee forth to dwell again in tents,⁵ as thou still dost, for thy pleasure, at the yearly religious feast. I have warned you by the prophets; I have made one vision follow another; I have caused vivid addresses to be delivered, to turn you back to Me; yet Gilead has become a land of heathen wickedness, and will surely be brought to nothing.

¹ Menahem was playing off Egypt against Assyria.

² Properly, a "charge against."

³ Israel—here, perhaps for both kingdoms.

⁴ Hosea xii. 7 ff.

⁵ Will cast them out of their settled homes.

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They sacrifice to bullocks at Gilgal, and therefore will their altars be overthrown and become like heaps of stone, here and there, on the furrows of the field."¹

The past history of Israel shows how, even in the darkest hour, God had cared for it.

"Jacob fled to the plains of Aram,¹ Israel served Laban as a slave there, for a wife; for a wife he tended sheep; yet God watched and guarded him with loving care. By a Prophet² Jehovah led Israel forth from Egypt, by a Prophet He preserved him in the wilderness. But Ephraim has now rebelled and turned aside, though pressed by no such need or danger and has thus provoked God to bitter wrath; therefore shall Jehovah leave him to his blood-guiltiness; his Lord shall avenge the dishonour done to Himself."

The next discourse points once more to the idolatry of Israel as its ruin.³

"When Ephraim spoke, of old, there was trembling in the peoples round, and he raised himself to glory as a separate kingdom. But since he went aside to Baal his might is gone. Yet, still, they sin more and more; they make molten images of their silver; idols, only the work of craftsmen, according to their fancy. To these the priests who offer men as sacrifices make prayers; they kiss the calves.⁴ Therefore shall they be like the morning cloud and like the dew which vanishes in the early hours,⁵ like chaff driven by the stormy wind from the threshing-floor; like smoke blown away from the open lattice.⁶ Yet I am Jehovah, thy God; since the day when I led thee from Egypt, hither, thou hast known no mighty God but Me, for there is no true Saviour beside Me. I knew thee in the wilderness; in the land of glowing heat; thou wast filled with the rich pasture that I gave thee;

¹ Hosea xii. 12.

² Moses.

³ Hosea xiii.

⁴ *Hitzig. Schmoller.* What better proof of Ephraim's folly and sin could there be than that they should offer *men* to calves?

⁵ See p. 349.

⁶ The Hebrews had no chimneys. The smoke found its way out at the windows and the door.

thou wast filled and thy heart waxed proud; therefore thou hast forgotten Me.

"But now I am become to thee like a lion; I lurk in the way for thee like a leopard;¹ like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will seize thee; I will tear out thy heart; I will feed on thee like a hungry lioness; the wild beast of the field will devour thee."²

After this outburst of Divine indignation, the tenderness of the prophet again bursts forth. His very sternness is the utterance of love. The God whose they are still, yearns for them, and cannot let them perish.

"O Israel,³ it has been thy destruction that thou hast set thyself against Me, thy Help! Where is now thy King,⁴ that he may save thee in all thy cities? Where are thy Judges, of whom thou saidst 'Give me a King and Princes'? I have once and again given thee a king in my wrath and taken him from thee in mine anger. The iniquity of Ephraim is recorded, sealed up, and preserved in the archives of God. The sorrows of a travelling woman come on him; he is a foolish son, he comes not forth from his sins in this the moment when spiritual birth is nigh.⁵ If he did, I would save him from the hand of the grave, I would redeem him from death! Then would he say, O death, where are thy plagues! O grave where is thy destruction!

"But, as he will not repent, pity shall be hid from Mine eyes!

"Though he boast of his power and greatness, for his very name means 'the doubly fruitful,' the east wind will come, the wind of Jehovah,⁶ and shall blow from the wilderness, and dry up his brooks, and sand up his springs. He will plunder your costly treasures, and in that day Samaria will sorrow for having rebelled against her God: she will fall by the sword: her children shall be dashed in pieces; her matrons ripped open!"

¹ The leopard was formerly common in the Holy Land. Thus we have Beth Nimrah, "the house of the leopard," in the tribe of Gad. Num. xxxii. 3.

² The plural pronoun is used in the Hebrew, but the singular continued to suit the English idiom. ³ Hosea xiii. 9.

⁴ Spoken after King Hosea had been taken prisoner and carried off, with many of his chief men.

⁵ A paraphrase of the text.

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The close of the prophet's appeals is near, but he cannot end without one more attempt to win back his people to God¹:—

"O Israel, return to Jehovah, thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to Jehovah; say to Him: 'Forgive all our sin, and receive us graciously; when we come with our prayers, the offerings² of our lips. Asshur shall not, henceforth, be our reliance; we will not trust to the horses of Egypt;³ we will no more say to the work of our hands, "Ye are our gods"; O Thou, in whom, alone, the fatherless⁴ findeth mercy."

Then shall the answer come from Him who waits to be gracious and delighteth to forgive:—

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for My anger is turned away from him. I will be like the dew unto Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like the olive-tree; his smell as Lebanon. Once more shall they that dwell under the shadow of his hills have harvests of corn, and flourish like the vine; they shall be famous as the glorious wine of Lebanon. Say, O Ephraim, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' Then, will I, Jehovah, say, 'I have heard and observed thee—I shall be to thee as an ever green fig-tree,⁵ from me is thy fruit found.'"

The prophet, in conclusion, asks—

"Who is wise, so as to understand this? Prudent, that he may

¹ Hosea xiv.

² Lit., "bullocks."

³ Egypt was famous for its cavalry.

⁴ Israel felt itself fatherless now, and pleaded for God to become its Father once more.

⁵ *Vulgate*—fir. *Sept.*—Juniper bush *German*—fir. *Heb.*—cypress. (With the cedar, the glory of Lebanon.) Noyes has "olive-tree." Eichhorn, "fig-tree." The fig-tree appears more suitable for fruit suited for food.

know it? For the ways marked out by Jehovah are right, the just walk in them safely, but the wicked shall stumble therein."

Such was the language in which the inspired preacher spoke to the people of Samaria and Israel more than 2,600 years ago. The deepest emotion, the intensest earnestness breathe in every word. He is moved, here, to the tenderest pathos at the prospect of the ruin of his country; there he bravely denounces its sins, with no regard to his personal interests or safety. The profoundest confidence alike in the promises and the threatnings of God glows in every utterance. Nor can there be a more touching enforcement of the quenchless and all-patient love of Jehovah to His people than these wondrous discourses present. The most striking figures are used to embody this pervading thought. God is the Husband of Israel and loves her even after her unfaithfulness; brings her back by tender words, and longs for her love to return, that He may pour forth His own love to her again. Even the awful glory of the Divine holiness, which threatens to consume the sinful nation, is only the radiance of eternal benevolence. The God, who loves so deeply, demands to be alone adored. Wrath may burn for a time, but infinite pity, amidst all, anticipates the time when the unfaithful one will come back and make it possible to shed on her the abiding sunshine of heavenly favour.¹

¹ I have spoken only of the love of God to Israel as a nation, in its historical relations in Hosea's day. But I do not forget or overlook the far deeper and more glorious significance of the Divine promises in the disclosure of redeeming love through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, nor the far wider application of God's threatnings as bearing on every soul of man that doeth evil.

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CHAPTER X.

THE OPENING OF ISAIAH'S MINISTRY.

TO understand the prophets it is above all things necessary to know as fully as possible the history of their times, for, as we have seen in the cases of Joel, Amos, and Hosea, they were preachers of righteousness to their contemporaries as well as seers who revealed the distant future. The present, indeed, was their especial concern, though the Spirit of God used them to foretell, when it was thought fit, the events of succeeding times.¹

¹ "The prophets were the preachers not the predictors, the forthspeakers of God's eternal plan and methods of governing men, not the foretellers of particular events, of and to their nation. So our Lord and His Apostles understood the word. The sermons of a Latimer at Paul's Cross, of a Luther at Worms, of a Knox before the Popish queen and nobles, the field preachings of a Wesley or Whitfield—and, within narrower limits, the orations of a Burke in defence of justice, laws and institutions—these, taken with the lives and acts, and, when need was, the death of the men, are the true counterparts of what Isaiah and the rest of the Hebrew prophets thought, did, and suffered." Sir E. Strachey's *Hebrew Politics*, p. 6.

"They denounced oppression and amassing overgrown properties, and grinding the labourers to the smallest possible pittance; and they denounced the Jewish Hig'1 Church party for countenancing all these iniquities and prophesying smooth things to please the Jewish aristocracy." Arnold's *Life*, p. 225.

The empire of Assyria was the great object of men's thoughts and fears in the eighth century before Christ. Its seat lay in the region of two mighty rivers, the Euphrates and Tigris, far to the east and north-east of Palestine, from which it was separated by the Syrian desert, which runs up like a huge wedge or triangle, almost to the foot of the vast chain of mountains extending from Asia Minor to Armenia. Necessitated by this impassable barrier to go up the Euphrates before they crossed over to Western Asia, the Assyrian armies could reach Palestine only from the north, and are hence always spoken of as coming from that quarter. The original capital of the empire lay on the west bank of the Tigris, some miles south of Mosul, at a spot now known as Kalēh Schergat, and took its name Assur, from the chief deity worshipped by its citizens—Assur, "the good god."¹ This eponym passed thence to the whole region inhabited by the Assyrian people, even after the capital had been transferred farther north, to Nineveh, on the east bank of the Tigris, opposite the town of Mosul, at a point where the Greater Zab falls into the larger river. In this territory, almost the same as that known to the Greeks as Adiabene, the future empire had its cradle; the Armenian mountains girding it on the north; the Lesser Zab on the south; and Media on the East. Assyria proper was, thus, on the north and east, a mountainous country; but these highlands, clothed with the oak, the sycamore, the plum, the poplar, the sumac, and other trees, sink gradually into plains on the south and west. The climate was thus comparatively cool in the upper districts, while abundant streams flowing from them created a rich vegetation in the burning lowlands. The almond and mulberry, the orange, lemon, pome-

¹ Schrader, p. 8.

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granate, apricot, and vine; melons, apples, pears, plums, and cherries, flourished in different districts; with grain of all kinds, hemp, and even cotton. Inferior date palms and a few olives grew in the plains, but the citron trees were especially famous. As a whole, however, Assyria was very destitute of large timber. The sculptures of Nineveh show that the country abounded anciently in hares, deer of various kind, dogs, oxen, sheep, goats, the camel, the buffalo, the wild ass, the lion; eagles, vultures, ostriches, the partridge and other birds. The inhabitants belonged, like those of Babylonia, to the Semitic branch of the Caucasian race.¹ The language of both countries was the same, and so, in all essential respects, was the religion, that of Babylon being the elder. The writing of the Assyrians, moreover, is only a simpler form of the Babylonian. Their government was a repetition of the common type of Oriental despotism; unrestricted power being in the hands of the monarch. In contrast to the mass of the community he gloried in the number of the inmates of his harem, for not even natural laws were allowed to circumscribe so great a king. One wife, however, held the first place, and Sardapalus—Asurbanipal—is even sculptured sitting at a meal with his queen. Eunuchs abounded, as keepers of the royal seraglio; their chief bearing the title of Rab-saris.² They were also prized for a similar ignoble purpose in the harems of the great nobles, but they formed in addition the chief representatives of Assyrian art and science, and largely engrossed the profession of scribes, though this was shared by some who were not of their class. As elsewhere in the East, they often rose to very high posts.³

The government of the provinces was in the hand of

¹ Gen. x. 11.

² 2 Kings xviii. 17.

³ *Ibid.*

great officials, called Sagans, or Viceroy, who, in conquered districts, took also the title of the former ruler, as "princes" or "kings." The highest officers of state were the Tartan,¹ or commander-in-chief; the Rabshakeh, the chief of the staff;² and the Rabsaris. The whole State was organized on a strictly military footing, and to this the rulers of Nineveh owed the enormous political success they attained at the head of so warlike a people.³ They were not, however, indifferent to art or science, the latter of which they largely borrowed from the Babylonians. Astronomy and mathematics were special studies among them, and indeed passed from Assyria to the natives of Western Asia. The day was divided into hours,⁴ with sub-divisions, our minutes and seconds,⁵ and they used the Babylonian weights,—the talent, mina, and shekel.⁶ They, rather than the Egyptians, were the teachers of the Greeks, not only in architecture, but in the plastic and other arts, and the artistic working of metals. Laborious chroniclers of the national history abounded; each king leaving copious annals of the events of his reign. Great care was bestowed on the preparation of chronological lists. Nor were the refinements of general literature neglected. Treatises on the language and its grammar, on religion, geography, and much else have come down to us. The Assyrians and Babylonians had each a poetry of their own, marked by depth of feeling and religious enthusiasm, and similar in rhythmical structure to the Hebrew psalms. They had even epics, which the Hebrews did not attempt; one known as "The Descent of Istar to Hades," being the principal example found as yet.

¹ Isa. xx. 1. 2 Kings xviii. 7.

² *Lenormant*. "A high military official." *Schrader*.

³ Isa. v. 27. ⁴ *Herod.*, ii. 109. ⁵ *Assyrien*, in *Riehm*.

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The religion of the two nations thus inter-related was fundamentally a star worship, but in the oldest times this was accompanied with a kind of Dualism. In the form in which it meets us it could not have been originally of Semitic origin, for even the desert Arabs have nothing at all similar. Their star worship, so far as it can be traced, is of a totally different nature. The Assyrian ideas can only, therefore, have been derived from the ancient race, apparently of the Turanian type, from which their writing was borrowed—the original inhabitants of Chaldæa, whom the Semites invaded from the south.¹ The godhead was represented among that primitive people by an eight-rayed star, and in keeping with this, the first worship of Babylonia and Assyria was directed to the sun, moon, and five planets, from which the week of seven days, and the names of those days, were derived.² The sun was called Samas,³ the Baal or "Lord" of Western Asia; the moon god, Sin. The planet Mercury was the god Nebo. Venus, as the morning star, was Istar—the Astarte of the Canaanites; as the evening star, Beltis or Baaltis—the Asherah of Palestine. Saturn was the god Adar or Adarmalik; the Adrammelech of Scripture. Shortened to Malik, it became the Canaanite Molech, or Moloch, or Milcom. This planet was further known as Kewan among the Syrians, Persians, Arabs, and Palestine nations, and also as Sakkuth.⁴ Jupiter was the god Merodach, known also as Bil, or Bel, "The

¹ Vol. i. p. 268 ff.

² The lunar month was divided into four weeks of seven days—the seventh being a Sabbath. But they were fixed on the 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th of the month, so that between the last Sabbath of one month and the first of another, more than seven days elapsed. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 14.

³ Heb. Shemesh.

⁴ Amos v. 26.

Lord." Mars was the god Nergal. These five gods were subordinated to the god Anu, who was, besides, supreme over two non-planetary gods, Nisroch or Ea, and Anos. The god Dagon, the "great fish," was worshipped as the emblem of vital fertility. Bin, Rammon, or Rimmon, was the god of thunder and of the atmosphere. There were, further, evil spirits of the night—Lil and Lilith,¹ male and female. The god Il, or El, moreover, afterwards supplanted in Assyria by the god Assur, remained as a dim recollection of the true god. Each of the gods had a female counterpart, such as Anat, Beltis, or Baaltis. Nor did those I have named by any means exhaust the Pantheon.

Based on the worship of the forces of nature, the Assyrian religion, like that of all Western Asia, was profoundly gross and sensual. Nothing laid to the charge of the gods of Palestine is too foul to be applied to those of Nineveh.

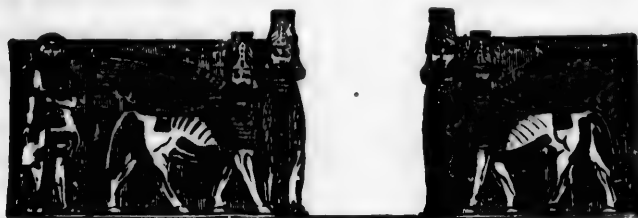
Unlike most Asiatics, the Assyrians were a fierce and warlike race; showing their nature even in their field sports by preferring to hunt the lion and the wild bull rather than gentler animals. The invasion by their armies was as "a tempest of hail and a destroying storm," or "a flood of mighty waters."² Nineveh was a "bloody

¹ See (Heb.) Isa. xxxiv. 14. See A. V. "screech-owl;" margin, "night-monster." According to the Rabbis, Lilith was a spectre which took the form of a finely-dressed woman, and waylaid and killed children. Buxtorff says, that the German Jews in his day wrote with chalk on the corners of the room where a child was born, and on the bed, "Come, Adam and Eve: begone Lilith." They wrote up also the names of the three angels of medicine and healing—Senoï, Sansenoï, and Sammangeloph. Lilith had been originally a demon wife of Adam. *Lex. Heb. and Chald.*, s. v. Gesenius, *Isaia*, vol. i. p. 915 ff. *Eisenmenger*, vol. ii. p. 413 ff.

² Isa. xxviii. 2.

city" in the eyes of the Hebrew prophets.¹ Prisoners might be spared to toil as slaves, but the terrible cruelties inflicted on vast numbers of them after a battle or a siege have been already quoted in the words of an Assyrian king himself.² To impale, to flay alive, to blind, to lead with rings through the lips, were only some of the forms of torture.

Nor could the Assyrians be said to have the best virtues of the brave; for as a nation they are branded as treacherous, untruthful, and lawless.³ No treaty could bind them; might was right, and when interest seemed to demand it, they "regarded no man."⁴ Their pride was that of a race which looked on all others as their natural inferiors.⁵



GATEWAY OF SARGON'S PALACE, KHORSABAD.

The god Ninip, strangling a lion, stands on the left hand.

The grandeur of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, has been realized only in recent times through the excavations made in its ruins. Those vast groups of mounds, widely isolated from each other, have been supposed by some to have been enclosed in a common rampart, but no traces of such an erection have been as yet discovered,

¹ Nah. iii. 1.

² Vol. ii. p. 399.

³ Isa. xxxiii. 1. Nah. iii. 1. Jonah iii. 8.

⁴ Isa. xxxiii. 8.

⁵ Zeph. ii. 15. Ezek. xxxi. 10, 11. Isa. x. 7-14; xixvii. 24-28.

and each mound is walled completely round. In each of them however, the ruins of great palaces have been found, their lofty gates flanked by colossal human-headed lions or oxen; their countless halls lined with huge slabs of alabaster, covered with representations of the military, civil, and religious glories of the king, and scenes taken from his feats in the chase. The palace of Sardanapalus—Assurbanipal—was of vast dimensions. Its entire length was at least 350 feet, and its breadth almost as great; while the court before it was 120 feet long and 90 broad. Temple towers rose in steps in the cities, each step sacred to a particular god; a watch-tower, from which the heavens could be observed, crowning the whole.¹ All the resources of unlimited wealth and despotic power were expended, age after age, in making the palaces, temples, and public edifices of Nineveh the glory of the empire. Magnificent gardens for the pleasure of the monarch and his court, or of the nobles, varied the monotony of splendour. But the material employed for the construction of the grandest as well as the humblest dwellings or buildings made their obliteration certain after a time, when once they were deserted. Sun-dried bricks might last for centuries if carefully protected by plaster from the ravages of the weather. But, once exposed, they soon crumbled into shapeless mounds, hiding and preserving the alabaster slabs of palaces, with their pictures and writing; the tablets of baked clay, once in libraries and imperial registries and record chambers, and all the other relics of Nineveh. The great wall guarding the city was one of the wonders of antiquity; for Xenophon, who passed close by it on his retreat with the Ten Thousand, long after it had been left to moulder away, speaks of it as still 150 feet

¹ Vol. i. p. 275 ff.

high and 50 feet in width.¹ It was built of limestone to the height of 50 feet; above that, of sun-dried bricks. Gates pierced it at irregular intervals, lofty towers rising above them for their special defence. Guard-houses for the soldiers on duty were attached to these, and huge colossal human-headed bulls adorned each side. The ground within the gateway was paved with large slabs of limestone on which the marks of chariot wheels are still visible.

But this vast rampart was not the only defence of the city. Moats, the channel of the river, and long canals dug for the purpose, cut it off from the country around, and made its siege much more difficult.²

The Assyrian empire had been founded for many ages,³ and its people had shown themselves warlike and powerful, but their arms had not threatened Palestine till the 9th century before Christ. In the 14th and 15th centuries Egypt had been the great military power, and had marched its armies repeatedly over Palestine and Syria, sometimes as far as Nineveh.⁴ Even at that early date a fierce struggle had begun between Assyria and Babylon, the daughter and the mother, which was continued from generation to generation. In the 13th century the fortunes of the empire sank very low, but a great king, Tiglath-pileser I., who reigned from B.C. 1120 to B.C. 1100, once more raised its power, and at his death left a wide territory nominally subject to him, from the Mediterranean

¹ *Anab.*, III. iv. 10.

² The authorities for this sketch of the Assyrian empire are Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, vols. i. and ii. Smith's *Assyria*. Schrader, *Assyrien und Nineve*, in *Rehm*. Kneucker, *Assyrien und Nineve*, in *Schenkel Eisenlohr's Geschichte*. Maspero's *Histoire Ancienne*, etc., etc.

³ B.C. c. 1820.

⁴ Thothmes III. did so.

to Babylon, Palestine, however, lying south of its sweep. His fierce career must have been the talk of men in the days of Eli and Samuel, for he was the Buonaparte of their age.

As often happens, however, in the East, the empire, created at such an expense of human misery, broke up at his death, and Assyria again fell into comparative insignificance. It was in this interval that the empire of David rose; the decay of the great monarchy on the Euphrates making his Syrian conquests possible. But in the time of King Asa of Judah, the fortunes of Nineveh were once more in the ascendant. A great king had risen. Yet there was again a temporary eclipse; nor was it till about the reign of Jehoshaphat, the son of Athaliah, that the later Assyrian empire, destined to have such a controlling influence on the fortunes of the Jewish race, was founded by King Assur-nazir-habal.¹ Assyria had been shut out from the Mediterranean for two hundred years, but he cut his way to it once more. Tyre, Sidon, Gebal and Arvad brought him rich gifts in token of submission,² and for the first time the gigantic shadow of the new power fell across Palestine, alarming its various populations with an anticipation of the terrible fate that had struck down other lands.

Hemmed in on the east and north, as has been said, by the great mountain range which, under various names, stretches from Asia Minor to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, the west and south-west offered the only free outlet for the military ambition of the newly revived empire. Syria and the Mediterranean coasts having been once reached, it became henceforth the fixed effort of Assyria to conquer all the regions thus laid open.

¹ — "Assur protects his son." B.C. 883-859.

² Smith's *Assyria*, p. 43. Gebal = Byblos.

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The progress of its arms from that time to the fall of Damascus and Samaria has already been traced.

Since the time of Shishak, the founder of the dynasty known as the twenty-second,¹ Egypt had been agitated and weakened by internal disputes and wars. That king had united the whole country under his sceptre and had been able to invade Judea with a resistless army in Rehoboam's day. His successors, however, confined themselves to their domestic affairs, cultivating the arts of peace, and averse to war and conquest, so that little is known of their reigns. But a custom had been introduced by him which was slowly bringing the monarchy to ruin. Before the rise of his dynasty, the high offices of State had been seized by the priests of Amon, who had thus usurped supreme power. To prevent the recurrence of such an evil, he confided the great trusts of the kingdom to members of the royal family, giving each a district and revenue to maintain his dignity. It was this practice which Rehoboam and other Jewish kings imitated towards their own sons, but its results were disastrous. These princes of Egypt before long aspired to independence; if not in the first generation, at least in the next. Relying on bands of Libyan mercenaries, some of them even aimed at the throne. Civil wars were incessant, till at last the Prince of Tanis succeeded in overpowering all rivals, and founded

¹ Brugsch was the first to notice that this dynasty was of Asiatic origin; but his theory of its being Assyrian in any political sense is questioned. Lenormant says that Shishak was the descendant of a Syrian, or, perhaps, Assyrio-Babylonian adventurer, who had come to Egypt during the twentieth dynasty. In the fifth generation from him Shishak made his way to the throne, subduing the petty kings and chiefs by whom the Nile valley had long been held. *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 339.

a new dynasty, the twenty-third. But even under this sovereignty the petty kings, in great measure, held their own; no fewer than twenty dividing the land between them under their nominal head.¹

Determined to assert their authority, the Tanite kings fought hard against these local kinglets, and they, in their turn, unable to cope with the royal forces, committed the fatal error of calling in the aid of the Cushite or Ethiopian kings of Nubia and Lower Egypt. Of these, Piankhi, "the Living One," proved a ruinous ally, for he had no sooner overthrown the Pharaoh than he seized his throne and proclaimed himself king of all Egypt; founding the dynasty known as the "Ethiopian," under which Egypt was to enjoy a glimpse of its old renown.

While Assyria hung like a war-cloud over the north-east, and Egypt heaved with revolution in the south-west, a child was born in Jerusalem, destined to leave a greater name than all the monarchs or warriors of his age. The birth-year of Isaiah, the greatest of the prophets, seems to have been about B.C. 760,² or perhaps earlier. He appears to have been a Benjamite,³ and was the son of one Amoz, of whom we know nothing beyond the name, for the various Jewish traditions, that he was no other than Amos the prophet, or a brother of King Amaziah,

¹ Isa. xix. 11, 13. Zoan = Tanis; Noph = Memphis. *Lenormant*.

² He entered on his prophetic office in the year that King Uzziah died (Isa. vi. 1). But we know from the Assyrian records that Uzziah was alive in B.C. 740. Supposing Isaiah to have been twenty years old when his prophetic activity began, this would take us back to B.C. 760. But Uzziah may have lived several years after B.C. 740.

³ Neh. xi. 7. Jer. xxix. 21. Ithiel = Immanuel = "God with us," originally, the name of Isaiah's son. Isa. vii. 14; viii. 8.

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are more unfounded inventions. His great-grandson¹ and his great-great-grandson are said to have been prophets; and the name of one of his great-grand-children, Kolaiiah, "the voice of Jehovah,"² appears to show that prophecy was a special endowment in the family through successive generations. It is noteworthy also that when Isaiah married, he chose a wife who was herself a prophetess.³

Dwelling in Jerusalem, the centre of political life and activity, the social position of the future prophet's family seems to have been such as to give him every advantage. Instead of being lost in an obscure village, like his contemporary Micah, or passing his days on the hills, or in the sycamore groves, like Amos, he was surrounded from childhood by the stir and importance of the capital, in which he was hereafter to be the special councillor of the throne and an honoured personal friend of its great occupant, Hezekiah.⁴ Meanwhile, the significance of his name,—*"Salvation is from Jehovah,"*⁵—must have had a weighty influence on a mind so devout. His boyhood and youth, moreover, were passed under the healthy religious and political influences of the wise and good Uzziah, from the glory of whose reign his own character and sentiments caught a tone which marked them through life. In all probability Jeroboam II. was still reigning in Israel in his early childhood, but, as he grew up, the northern kingdom was sinking into anarchy and heathenism, in spite of the earnest and fearless preaching of Amos and Hosea. It is clear, indeed, from portions of his own prophecies, that those of his predecessors were

¹ Jer. xxix. 21. Neh. xi. 7.

² Hitzig translates it *"There is a voice,"* but Mühlau and Volek render it as in the text.

³ Isa. viii. 3.

⁴ Ewald's *Propheten*, vol. i. p. 169.

⁵ *Ibid.*

familiar to him.¹ Passages, allusions, and expressions, frequently occur, which show that the various books known as the Pentateuch,—though they may afterwards have been revised under the guidance of inspiration,—were then in existence, and were not only diligently studied, but taught to the pious young. Isaiah's writings show such a familiarity with the early sacred literature of his

¹ The following list of parallel passages is from Cheyne:—

Isaiah i. 11-14;	Amos v. 21, 23;	Hos. vi. 6;	Mic. vi. 6-8	(against formal worship).
„ iv. 2;	„ ix. 13;	„ ii. 21, 22		(fertility in the Messianic age).
„ v. 11, 13;	„ vi. 5, 7			(luxury of the princes).
„ v. 20;	„ v. 7;			(confusion of morals).
„ „	„ vi. 12;			
„ ix. 10-13;	„ ix. 11, 12			(the Messianic empire).
„ i. 20;		„ iv. 15		(spiritual adultery).
„ i. 23;		„ ix. 15		(law-makers, law-breaker).
„ i. 29;		„ iv. 13		(idolatrous groves).
„ i. 2;		Mic. i. 2		(prosopopeia of inanimate nature).
„ iii. 15;		„ iii. 2, 3		(strong figure for oppression).
„ v. 8;		„ ii. 2		(violent extension of landed estates).
„ vii. 14;		„ v. 3-5		(the Messiah and His birth).
„ ix. 7;		„ v. 13		(idols to be destroyed in the Messianic age).
„ xxx. 23;		„ vii. 19		(strong figure for forgiveness of sin).
„ xxxviii. 17;				

The following parallels are from Bunsen's *Bibel-Urkunden*:—

Joel iii. 1, 12 compared with Isa. xxii. 15; Amos ii. 12 compared with Isa. xxx. 10; Amos iv. 11 compared with Isa. vii. 4; Amos v. 2, 15 compared with Isa. iii. 8, 26, x. 20; Hos. viii. 4 compared with Isa. xxx. 1; Hos. ix. 15 compared with Isa. i. 23. In the same way Amos had borrowed from Joel. See Amos i. 2; Joel iv. 16; i. 10. Amos ix. 13; Joel iii. 18. Hosea borrows from both. See Amos vii. 9, Hos. i. 4, 5; Amos i. 2, Hos. xi. 10; Amos ii. 5, Hos. viii. 14; Amos v. 5, Hos. iv. 15; Amos vi. 12 Hos. x. 4; Amos vii. 4, Hos. v. 7; Amos vii. 9, Hos. x. 8; Amos viii. 7, 8, Hos. v. 5, vii. 10, iv. 3.

people as could only have come from knowing it well in his earliest years.¹

- ¹ Isaiah i. 2 a. Deut. xxxii. 1, "Hear, O heavens."
 " xxx. 9 } Deut. xxxii. 6, 20, "faithless children."
 " i. 3 " xxxii. 6, 28, 29, "Israel is without knowledge."
 " i. 6 " xxviii. 35, "Israel's sickness."
 " i. 9, 10 " xxxii. 32, "Sodom and Gomorrah."
 " i. 17, 23 } Ex. xxii. 22, Deut. xxvii. 19, "the orphan and the widow."
 " x. 2 } Lev. xxv. 18, 19; xxvi. 18, 25, "prosperity through obedience."
 " i. 24 }
 " iii. 1 } Ex. xxxiii. 17; xxxiv. 23.
 " x. 16, 23 }
 " xix. 4 }
 " iii. 9 Gen. xix. 5, "their sin as Sodom."
 " iv. 5 Ex. xiii. 21; Num. ix. 15, 16, "a cloud by day," etc.
 " v. 8 Deut. xix. 14, violent extension of estates.
 " v. 10 " xxviii. 39, curse upon the vineyards.
 " v. 23 " xvi. 19; Lev. xix. 15, unjust judgment.
 " v. 26 }
 " xxxiii. 19 } " xxviii. 40, the swift unintelligible foe.
 " x. 26 }
 " xi. 15, 16 } Ex. xiv. 21, 22, the passage of the Red Sea.
 " xii. 2 b. " xv. 2, Song of Moses quoted.
 " xxx. 17 Deut. xxxii. 30; Lev. xxvi. 8, one thousand at the rebuke of one.
 " xiii. 19 " xxix. 23, overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 " xxiv. 18 c. Gen. vii. 11, "windows opened."
 " xl. 3 Lev. xxvi. 41, 43, compare 34, "guilt paid off."
 " xli. 4 Deut. xxxii. 39, "I am He."
 " xliii. 13 " " "none that rescueth out of My hand."
 " xli. 8, 9 }
 " li. 2 } Gen. xi. 31-xii. 4, call of Abraham and Israel.
 " xliii. 16, 17 }
 " li. 9, 10 } Ex. xiv. 21-31, passage of the Red Sea.
 " lxiii. 11-13 }
 " xliii. 27 Gen. xxv. 29-34, c. 27, Jacob's sins.
 " xlv. 2 Deut. xxxii. 15; xxxiii. 5, 6, Jeshurun.
 " xlviii. 19 Gen. xxii. 17; xxxii. 12, Israel as the sand.
 " xlviii. 21 Ex. xvii. 5-7; Num. xx. 7-13, water from the rock.
 " l. 1 Ex. xxi. 7; Deut. xxiv. 1, law of divorce.
 " li. 3 Gen. ii. 8, Eden.
 " lii. 4 " xlvii. 4, compare xii. 10, Israel's guest-right in Egypt.
 " lii. 13 Ex. xii. 11, 51; xiii. 21, 22, "in trembling haste"; Jehovah in the van and in the rear.
 " liv. 9 Gen. viii. 21; ix. 11, the deluge and Jehovah's Oath.
 " lviii. 14 Deut. xxxii. 13, "riding over the heights of the land."

In B.C. 745, as we have seen, Tiglath-pileser, or Pul, seized the throne of Nineveh, and the fate of Western Asia was sealed. Occupied for some time with subduing rebellion in Assyria itself, and in curbing the nations on the upper Euphrates, he was at last able, in 743, as will be remembered, to demand tribute once more from the kingdoms of Lebanon and Palestine. Nor was it refused. Rezin of Damascus, Menahem of Israel, Hiram of Tyre, and the king of Hamath, moodily consented to pay it; but danger was no sooner past for the moment than a new Syrian league was formed, and the tax again withheld. The confederacy had been mainly brought about by the strong and warlike Uzziah of Judah, and Jerusalem was, doubtless, afoot from day to day—Isaiah among its other citizens—to see the departure of troops for the scene of war with the mighty enemy. In 742 the strong city¹ of Arpad—now Tel Erfad—the capital of a powerful State—had been attacked. It lay on a tributary of the Orontes, about ten miles north of the present Aleppo, and two hundred north of Damascus, in a rich plain. Knowing the terrible fate of a rebellious town, it resisted bravely till 740, but at last fell, and Palestine once more lay at the feet of the Great King. But fresh troubles soon broke out in Mesopotamia. Obedience was nowhere rendered except when secured by overmastering force, for

- Isaiah lix. 19 Deut. xxiii. 19, "groping like the blind."
 „ lxiii. 9 Ex. ii. 24; iii. 7; xxiii. 20-23, Jehovah's sympathy with Israel and the guidance of His angel.
 „ lxiii. 11 Deut. xxxii. 7, "remembering the days of old."
 „ lxiii. 14 Ex. xxxiii. 14; Deut. iii. 20; xii. 9, "rest in Canaan."
 „ lxx. 22 Deut. xxviii. 30, a promise modelled on a threat.
 „ lxx. 25 Gen. iii. 14, dust, the serpent's food.
 „ li. 2 Notice of Sarah; liv. 9, of Noah.
 „ lxiii. 11 Notice of Moses and Aaron, Shepherds of Israel, perhaps also, Miriam. Cheyne's *Isaiah*, vol. ii. pp. 210-20, 225.
¹ Schrader, art. *Arpad*, in *Rehm*.

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government meant only oppression and wrong. The city of Calno rebelled,¹ and it was not till 738 that Palestine saw the invading armies of Assyria. Victory after victory having made Pul more terrible than ever, almost all the kings of the land except Uzziah, or if he had died before this, his valiant son Jotham, did homage to him forthwith, on being summoned. Rezin of Damascus, Menahem of Samaria, Hiram of Tyre, the king of Hamath, and "the queen of the Arabs," as we have seen, became tributary vassals.²

The death year of Uzziah had been marked by the public entrance of Isaiah on his prophetic office. Fifty years of prosperity and fame had, in some respects, lowered the national character. Wealth had brought the corrupting influences of luxury with it into the higher classes; military glory had fostered haughty pride in the people as a whole. Public virtue was decaying, and the germs of a fatal degeneracy were visible in all classes alike, in the tendency to idolatry and superstition, which was only too marked. Isaiah, though still only a young man, already deeply pondered this state of things. The vassalage of Israel was a sad foreboding of the fate in reserve for Judah, if it did not listen to the counsels of the prophets, its faithful preachers. Joel, two generations before, had stirred the land, and through him and Jehoiakin a great reformation had been brought about, culminating in the glorious period of Uzziah. But a reaction had gradually set in, like the ungodliness in the northern kingdom, against which Amos and Hosea had lifted up their voices. Penetrated with the solemnity of their utterances, Isaiah had caught their spirit. His thoughts dwelt on the spiritual state and temporal prospects of his people, till a lofty enthusiasm, such as marked

¹ Isa. x. 9. Gen. x. 10.

² See p. 232.

those who received prophetic inspiration, filled his whole being. In this frame he, one day, visited the temple. There, the pealing trumpets, the hallelujahs of the choirs of Levites, and the cloud of incense from the Holy place, intensified still more the religious emotions with which his soul was moved. Suddenly a vision was vouchsafed him, the first and last he is recorded to have received. He was at the moment standing before the priests' court—the Holy Place in front, and the mysterious Holy of Holies beyond. And now, while he gazed, it seemed as if the dimensions of the temple grew indefinitely greater. Through the wide gates of cedar, thrown open to let the priests enter to the golden altar of incense, the many coloured veil of the hidden inner sanctuary appeared to be drawn aside, and in the mysterious gloom there rose before him an august vision of Jehovah sitting on His throne over the ark, which seemed standing on the clear sky, between earth and heaven. Here, as elsewhere in Scripture, as becomes the spirituality of the Divine Essence, no attempt is made to describe the awful Form that sat on it. But the skirts of His royal robes filled the great visionary temple which faded away into the eternities.¹ In the air, on each side of the throne, hovered mysterious guardians; two wings bearing them up, two veiling their faces in adoration, and two covering their feet, now naked, as became priestly service in the presence of the Almighty. His highest servants, they were there to minister to Him and proclaim His glory. As priests in the vast temple, they lifted their voices in lofty invocations; each calling to the other

Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of Hosts!
The whole earth is full of His glory!

¹ *Stanley*, vol. ii. p. 382. *Ewald*, *Propheten*, vol. i. p. 181.

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till the very posts of the gates, seen far off by the prophet, seemed to tremble with the sound, and the whole temple was filled with the incense of their praise.¹ The call of Isaiah to his prophetic office was a great moment in the history of the kingdom of God, and could not be more fittingly honoured than by the vision of the Almighty, thus seated in majesty, attended by His heavenly ministers, to give forth a commission of so weighty an importance in the advancement of His rule among men.² It was befitting, moreover, that the vision should mingle priestly service with its royal majesty, for it was no earthly king who was thus revealed, but the Holy God.

Such a spectacle might well overpower mortal and sinful man. Isaiah had never before realized so fully the greatness of the Almighty, nor His awful holiness, and felt as if his human weakness and unworthiness must perish in so august a presence. "Woe is me," cries he, "surely I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah Sabaoth."³ But while he fears that he will die, a seraph flies towards him to fit him for his great task. The coals⁴ of the altar glow with the holy words of adoration, as with a burning fire. To touch his lips with one consecrates them to the utterances of inspiration, and sets him apart as the prophet-apostle of God. When therefore the mysterious voice of Jehovah now asks who will undertake to speak for Him to Judah, the hitherto trembling spirit of the chosen seer is filled with a holy confidence, and he at once offers to do so.

But he little knows the task before him. In the words

¹ Rev. viii. 4.

² Ewald, *Propheten*, vol. i. p. 181.

³ Isaiah had read or knew of such passages as Gen. xviii. 23 ff. Ex. xxxiii. 20. Judges xiii. 22.

⁴ Wood embers, or charcoal.

that follow, its difficulties are sadly revealed. He will indeed be a prophet to "this people," which God will no longer call *His*; but the result of his life-long work among them will only be to make them more perverse and less open to receive the words he brings.¹ Their foreseen rejection of his message must indeed have this effect; for to thrust away the truth is to destroy religious sensibility and leave less faculty of repentance. "How long, O Lord, shall this blindness and perversity continue?" asks the newly consecrated seer; for prophecy had already foretold a time when Israel would return to its God. But the awful answer comes back from the heavens—It will last till the utter destruction of the Hebrew state; till the land be desolate, and the people carried off to another country by the enemy; whose name is not announced. The purifying fire of affliction will repeatedly consume all but a remnant, but from them a better race, "a holy seed"—the true people of Jehovah—will arise, as new shoots spring from the stump of a felled terebinth or oak.² The vision now passed away, but Isaiah henceforth felt himself divinely appointed as the prophet of God.

The dates of events in the Assyrian records seem to point to some corruption in the length of Jotham's reign. In 742 they mention Uzziah as being an active member of the Syrian league, and eight years later relate that Ahaz makes his formal submission to the Great King. The sixteen years assigned to Jotham in the Bible³ must hence be much curtailed, unless he be supposed to have reigned for a number of years along with Uzziah, who by his leprosy had been disqualified for the kingly office.

¹ Isa. vi. 9, 10, are five times quoted in the New Test. as realized in Christ's day, when the nation was near its doom.

² Isa. vi. 1-13.

³ 2 Chron. xxvii. 1. 2 Kings xv. 33.

Pekah was king of Samaria and Rezin of Damascus; the two acting in close alliance against Assyria—common danger uniting for the time, even such hereditary enemies. To secure Jotham as a confederate was now their great wish, but, perhaps under Isaiah's advice, he steadily refused. Unable to win him otherwise, the confederates forthwith tried force, and wasted their strength in inroads on Judah which were vigorously repelled.¹ At his death, however, things changed sadly for the worse.

¹ 2 Kings xv. 37.



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CHAPTER XI.

AHAZ AND ISAIAH.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.		KINGS OF JUDAH.	
ZACHARIAH, B.C. 770.		JOTHAM, B.C. 756-740.	
SHALUM, " "		AHAZ, " 740-724.	
MENAHEN, " 739-759.			
PEKAHIAH, " 759-751.			
PEKAH, " 751-728.		ASSYRIAN KINGS.	
HOSEA, " 728-723.		See page 214.	
SAMARIA TAKEN, 722.			

AHAZ, the son of Jotham, was a young man of twenty when he ascended the throne. His father, shrewd, practical, brave in war, and devout at all times, had left the kingdom strong, rich, and well organized.¹ Long continued prosperity had filled it with silver and gold,² and the army was in the highest efficiency. Its cavalry and chariots were especially famous;³ and a large merchant navy of Tarshish ships, sailing from Elath, could boast their gilded prows and stems, and purple sails, and brought home rich cargoes from the distant East.⁴ The districts east of the Jordan, regained by

¹ 2 Chron. xxvii. 3, 4. Isa. ii. 15.

² Isa. ii. 7. ³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Isa. ii. 6. The meaning given by Gesenius, Redslob, and Hitzig to the words translated "upon all pleasant pictures," A.V., are incorporated in the text.

Uzziah, were still retained.¹ But though himself true to Jehovah, Jotham had been unable to check the increasing corruption of the age. The prejudice of the people in favour of their ancient high places,² which had now become superstitious where they were not heathen, prevented his destroying them; and intercourse with the various nations round, through trade and extended empire, had gradually "filled the land" with idols.³ With the intellectual culture and the manufactures of Syria and Western Asia, soothsayers had also been introduced; diviners of the clouds from Philistia were common in Jerusalem,⁴ and professors of the black arts abounded.⁵ This unfaithfulness to Jehovah had been visited with heavy judgments, for as such the inroads of Pekah and Rezin were to be regarded.⁶

In Ahaz, "the Grasper," men soon found they had a king in every way the opposite of his father. Of his early training we know nothing, but his tastes show that he must have grown up under the influence of the old heathen court-party; the worshippers of foreign manners, to whom the old simplicity of the land and its hereditary faith were vulgar and provincial, in comparison with the refinement and gorgeous idolatry of Phenicia and Assyria. Under this faction,—the counterpart of the Persian and Macedonian parties of after ages, at Athens,—Ahaz, while an Israelite in blood, showed himself an alien in all other respects. Heathen foreigners were raised by him

¹ 2 Chron. xxvii. 5.

² Prof. J. P. Lesley, in *Man's Origin, etc.*, Boston, 1882, proposes as the derivation of "altar," the two words: al=*the*; tor=*hill*.

³ Isa. ii. 8.

⁴ Isa. ii. 6.

⁵ Isa. iii. 3, translated "eloquent orators," as in the text.

⁶ 2 Kings xv. 37. See p. 232.

to high offices in the state.¹ As early as the days of Solomon, Assyrian culture had gained a footing in Judea, through the Phenician architects and artists employed by the wise king. The House of the Forest of Lebanon had been copied from the great buildings of Nineveh; for its proportions, its cedar roofing, its numerous columns, its windows and doors squared at the top, are in exact correspondence with the Throne Room of an Assyrian Palace. The separation of the various regal edifices into several distinct groups; the large courts inside; their being paved with stone, and the employment of stone slabs to face the palace walls,² are also characteristics of the royal buildings of Nineveh. The overlaying of the temple with pure gold, so marvellous to us, was familiar to Babylonians, Assyrians, and Medes. Its ornamentation; its cherubim,³ palm trees, and open flowers, its pomegranates and lions, were thoroughly Assyrian. The height of the pillars Jachin and Boaz; their size and complicated capitals, have parallels at Persepolis. The lions that guarded the steps of Solomon's throne recall the lion figures at the Assyrian palace gates, and the throne of ivory is illustrated by the fragments of ivory furniture found at Nineveh.⁴

Ahaz, however, went very much further. A man of taste, as it was then understood, he sought to make Jerusalem rival the heathen capitals of the day. Gold and silver idols glittered in every part.⁵ An Assyrian altar, which at a later period he saw at Damascus, struck his fancy, and a copy of it was raised in Jerusalem from drawings sent thither by the king.⁶ It was apparently

¹ *Graetz*, vol. ii. p. 115.

² 1 Kings vii. 9.

³ Rawlinson thinks they were probably winged bulls. *Hist. Illust. of Old Test.*, p. 108.

⁴ *Rawlinson*, p. 108.

⁵ Isa. ii. 20; xxx. 22; xxxi. 7.

⁶ 2 Kings xvi. 10.

of hewn stone, three-sided, and sculptured, and thus very different from those of the Hebrews.¹ The morning and evening sacrifice were henceforth offered on this new erection; the brazen altar of Solomon being reserved for special sacrifices by Ahaz in person; for, like the Great King whom he wished to imitate, he affected personally to inquire of the gods when it pleased him.² It was removed, however, from its position of honour in front of the Holy Place, to the north side, and the new altar was set up on the sacred spot thus left free.³ To this innovation the high-priest Uriah,—in contrast to the inflexible spirit of his predecessor under Uzziah,—lent himself, apparently without opposition; nor does he seem to have resisted other changes to which it ultimately led the way. The brazen bulls beneath the great laver were, at a later time, removed, to get the copper for the tribute to Assyria: a stone base being put in their place—the small brazen lavers on wheels, the metal canopy over the royal stand in the temple court, and the brazen ornaments of the royal entrance to the temple, sharing the same fate.

In his passion for everything Assyrian, as if to show his gross servility as well as taste, Ahaz, still further, introduced the whole system of Mesopotamian idolatry. The worship of the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, as followed on the Tigris, was adopted by royal authority in Jerusalem.⁴ Snow-white sacred horses and magnificent chariots, dedicated, as in Assyria, to the sun-god, and used on his festivals,—the opening days of the various seasons,⁵—to go out to greet the sun at his

¹ Rawlinson's *Great Monarchies*, vol. ii. p. 273.

² 2 Kings xvi. 15, see v. 12. *Graetz*.

³ 2 Kings xvi. 14.

⁴ 2 Kings xxiii. 5.

⁵ Jewish tradition.

rise, were stalled in some of the chambers originally built for the priests and for the sacred vessels, etc., at the entrance of the temple.¹ For the worship of the planets and of the signs of the zodiac,² in Assyrian fashion, altars were built on the flat top of the palace, and were soon imitated on the roofs of private houses.³ A dial was erected, doubtless after an Assyrian pattern, near the palace, consisting apparently of a flight of graduated steps, to mark the daily progress of the solar shadow; their top serving as a watch-tower from which the movements of the heavens could be observed, for idolatrous purposes, by night.⁴ The courtiers prided themselves on learning the Assyrian language, which was related to the Aramaic or Syrian, and thus easy for Hebrews.⁵ Nor was this passion for copying Nineveh without some advantages. It apparently introduced a better mode of dividing time, and a higher taste in decorating the mansions of the great and in the shapes of furniture and vessels; for in this, as already stated, the Assyrians were the teachers even of the Greeks.⁶ A new style of house architecture also was brought into fashion in Jerusalem.⁷ But the evil which was learned far out-balanced the good.

Altars to heathen gods were planted at the corners of the streets, that incense might be burned on them by the passers by.⁸ An Asherah—the synonym of gross

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 11. Such horses were at times sacrificed to the sun. Keil, *Die Bücher der Könige*, p. 40. *Ewald Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 664.

² For "planets," 2 Kings xxiii. 5, Jewish tradition reads "signs of the zodiac."

³ Zeph. i. 5. Jer. xix. 13. *Ewald*, vol. iii. pp. 666-668.

⁴ Isa. xxxviii. 8. *Herod.*, ii. 109.

⁵ 2 Kings xviii. 26.

⁶ Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. i. p. 342.

⁷ Jer. xxii. 14.

⁸ 2 Chron. xxviii. 4.

impurity—was erected in the temple itself.¹ Wretched beings of both sexes, devoted to its foul service, had lodgings in the temple chambers; the women making the cloth, in the sacred courts, for the gaudy tents beneath which its orgies were carried on.² High places dedicated to the evil spirits of the desert³ were erected at the gates of Jerusalem and in other towns and villages.⁴ The worship of foreign gods was everywhere adopted, not only in all existing sanctuaries over the land, but in new ones. The old temples or high places, built by Solomon on the top of the Mount of Olives, for Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Moloch, still remained, and were now put once more to their former use.⁵ A new sanctuary to the last of these hateful idols was also added, in the valley of Hinnom, under the walls of Jerusalem, on a spot henceforth known, in contempt, amongst the faithful, as Tophet, “the spitting.” Here, a great brass image of the god was erected, with a furnace within it, a hollow-topped altar beneath its extended arms receiving the children offered to it, when they rolled from them into the flames.⁶ Nor can Ahaz be accused of insincerity in his dreadful superstition, for he gave the best proof of his devotion to it, by sacrificing at least one of his sons to the hideous idol, at some unknown crisis of his life.⁷ The worship of Jehovah was meanwhile more and more neglected, till, towards the close of the reign, the great doors of the temple were at last shut; the sacred lamps left unlighted; no incense offered, and the whole interior left to decay and neglect.⁸ Instead of the

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 6.² 2 Kings xxiii. 7.³ Heb.—satyrs.⁴ 2 Kings xxiii. 8; xvii. 9.⁵ 2 Kings xxiii. 13.⁶ See vol. iii. p. 366.⁷ 2 Kings xvi. 3. 2 Chron. xxviii. 3.⁸ 2 Kings xvi. 17, 18. 2 Chron. xxviii. 24; xxix. 3, 7, 16, 17.

white-robed priests of the national faith, crowds of those of the heathen gods, clad in black gowns, thronged the streets and roads.¹

It was soon felt by the neighbouring States that the strong hand which had guarded Judah was gone. Pekah and Rezin, no longer timid, boldly invaded the country and wasted it to the very gates of Jerusalem.² The army which had done so much under Uzziah and Jotham was shamefully defeated, and vast numbers of men, women, and children carried off as slaves to Damascus and Samaria, with an enormous booty. But a fraternal feeling still lingered in the bosoms of the northern tribes, and a prophet, otherwise unknown, used it skilfully on behalf of the captives. Pleading for them as of the same race, and impressing on the people of Samaria their guilt in thus enslaving their brethren, he succeeded in securing their peaceful restoration to Judah.³

But misfortunes soon accumulated. Elath on the Red Sea was taken by Rezin,⁴ and the one port of Judah thus lost. Edom, long a vassal, regained its independence, and took numbers of Jews captive. The Philistines rose and won back the towns of the Maritime Plain which Uzziah and Jotham had held. In the striking words of Chronicles, "Jehovah brought Judah low, because of Ahaz; for he had caused licentiousness in Judah, and trespassed sore against Jehovah."⁵

In the midst of such disasters and so much public

The closing of the temple gates and the extinction of the lamps is still kept as a fast on the 18th Ab—the end of July or the beginning of August.

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 5. "Black-robed," Heb. See Chamar: *Mühlau und Volk*.

² See p. 232.

⁴ 2 Kings xvi. 6.

³ 2 Kings xvi. 5. 2 Chron. xxviii. 5-15.

⁵ 2 Chron. xxviii. 17-19. *Gesenius*.

corruption, the tongue of Isaiah could not be silent. How often he addressed the people we have no means of knowing, but one great discourse, delivered some time before the capture of Elath, has been preserved.¹

Beginning by what seems to be a quotation from some older but unknown prophet, from whom Micah also, at a later time, borrowed the same passage more fully,² he prepared his hearers for the terrible judgments he was presently to foretell, by repeating an earlier promise of a glorious future, if they returned to the worship of God.³

"You know," said he, if we may amplify his words, "how it has been prophesied that 'it shall come to pass in future days that the mountain of the House of Jehovah shall be made the highest in honour, of all mountains, and be raised in fame above the hills, and all nations shall stream to it.' And how they will set out and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the House of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.' For out of Zion instruction in His law shall flow forth like a perennial stream, and His word flood abroad from Jerusalem. From its sacred heights He shall judge between the nations, and give His decisions to many peoples. And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-knives; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

"But these glorious promises depend for their fulfilment on yourselves. Up, then, O House of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah! Yet, alas! O Jehovah, Thou hast, for the time, cast off Thy people, the House of Jacob, for their sins! For they have adopted the evil customs and ways of the East; they are diviners of the clouds like the Philistines, and are full of the

¹ Isa. ii.-v.

² Isa. ii. 2-4. Micah iv. 1-4.

³ The authorities for the translations from Isaiah in the text are Delitzsch, Naegelsbach, Eichhorn, Hitzig, Cheyne, Gesenius, and Bunsen. The dates assigned to the prophecies, it may be said, vary with each translator to the most confusing extent. I have adopted those of Mr. Cheyne as the latest student of Isaiah.

sons of the alien. Their land is filled with silver and gold; there is no end of their wealth. It abounds with horses and chariots without number. It is full of idol gods. The people worship the work of their hands; that which their own fingers have made. Thus do the poor lower themselves, and the rich degrade themselves, so that they are unworthy to approach Thee or be Thy people, O Jehovah! They have brought on them Thy wrath and Thou canst not forgive them!

"Flee, therefore, ye people, into the rocks, and hide yourselves in the dust, from the terrors of Jehovah, and from the greatness of His majesty! For the pride of the great will be humbled, and the haughtiness of the people brought low, and Jehovah alone will be exalted in the day when He comes to judgment.

"For Jehovah of Hosts has, indeed, fixed a day to judge and bring low all that is proud and high; all that is now in honour; to bring low all that is high and lofty on earth; for nothing is too exalted for Him in His day of wrath. The storm of His fury shall burst upon all the cedars of Lebanon, now so proud; all the oaks of Bashan, now so strong; all the lofty mountains and high hills; all the lofty towers and high fortress walls; on the great Tarshish ships and their rich cargoes.¹ Verily, the pride of man shall be humbled, and the loftiness of mortals be abased, and Jehovah alone exalted in that day.

"In that day the idols,—those no-gods,—shall utterly vanish. And men shall flee into the caverns of the rocks and pits of the earth, to escape from the terrors of Jehovah and from the greatness of His majesty, when He rises from His throne and the earth trembles before Him.

"In that day every one will throw his idols of silver and his idols of gold which he made to worship, into any dark corner, where the unclean mole and bat may creep over and nestle among them, and will himself flee to the clefts of the rocks and the fissures of the lofty crags, from before the terrors of Jehovah and the greatness of His majesty, when He rises from His throne, and the earth trembles before Him.

¹ Ewald has for this, "high obelisks"; Noyes has, "and all that is delightful to the eye"; Eichhorn has, "all splendid monuments." The imagery as a whole is designed to paint the impending ruin of the rich and great of the land.

"Cease¹ ye then from confidence in the strength or wisdom of man, whose life is only the breath of his nostrils! How little help can be had from a being so weak?² For, behold, the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, already takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah every stay and support; all on whom its bread and its water depend;³ hero and warrior, judge and prophet, soothsayer and elder, the captain of fifty and the man of position, the counsellor, the skilled artificer,⁴ and the skilled enchanter. And, hereafter, says He, I will make youths their princes and with childish waywardness shall they rule over them.⁵ Lawlessness and misery will get the upper hand. The people will oppress one another; man against man, neighbour against neighbour. The lad will turn fiercely on the old man; the common man on the noble. Anarchy will reign. Amidst ceaseless internal strife, oppression, and violence, the worst men will rise to momentary power. And if a well meaning man take hold of his brother, in his father's house, saying, 'You have a coat! Be our ruler; take the wreck of the kingdom under your charge'—he will lift up his voice and say, 'I will not be the healer of the land, for I have neither bread nor clothing in my house. Ye shall not set me to be ruler of the people!'

"Alas! Jerusalem is sunk into ruin and Judah is fallen; for both their words and deeds are against Jehovah, to provoke the eyes of His majesty. Their brazen, unfeeling⁶ looks witness against them; they boast of their sins, without shame, like Sodom. Woe to their souls, for they have done themselves evil! 'Tell the righteous,' says Jehovah, 'that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. But woe to the wicked, for what his hands have earned shall be given him!' As for My people, a child is their ruler; women lord it over

¹ Isaiah iii. 1 ff.

² This verse is omitted in the *Sept.*

³ God is about to lead them all into exile, and has already cut down many of them. Ewald and others retain this last clause; Cheyne and Hitzig think it a gloss.

⁴ *Eichhorn. Cheyne.*

⁵ Ahas was twenty when he became king; Manasseh was twelve.

⁶ *Eichhorn. Ewald.*

them.¹ My people, your leaders lead you astray and have broken up the path in which you should go!

"For this cause Jehovah will shortly visit you in wrath; He stands up to try the nations. He will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and with its princes,—accusing them thus: 'So, then, ye have eaten up the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses! What mean ye by treading down My people, and grinding the faces of the wretched?' saith Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts."

The prophet has denounced the sins of the men; he now turns to those of the women.

"Thus, also, saith Jehovah, Because the daughters of Zion are proud, and walk with neck thrown back, and cast their eyes about, and mince their steps, to set their anklets tinkling as they go: for this, the Lord will make their heads bald,² and give them over to be dishonoured by the enemy.³ In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their anklets;⁴ the golden disks and crescents hung on their hair, their foreheads, and their necks;⁵ the ear-rings, the arm-chains, and the fine veils; the coronets, the stepping-chains,⁶ and the costly girdles; the scent-bottles and the amulets; the finger and nose-rings; the gala dresses and the costly mantles; the cloaks and the purses; the hand mirrors and the fine linen underclothes; the turbans and

¹ A young prince under the power of his harem, as often happens in the East.

² Smite them with a scab.

³ Delitzsch (in effect).

⁴ Rings of gold and silver, often hollow, to increase the sound, and at times hung with small bells, are still worn round the ankles in Egypt and the East; the tinkling they make being thought an attraction. *Lane* and *Kitto*.

⁵ Very small ornaments of gold tied on silken threads are still worn in the hair in Egypt. Numerous braids fall over the shoulders, and the threads, resplendent with the spangles, are intermixed with these. *Lane*. Disks, etc., were also, apparently, hung on the forehead and neck.

⁶ In use yet in the East. *Delitzsch*. To make the wearers take short steps.

the large veils. In that day, instead of perfume there will be rottenness; instead of a costly girdle, a rope; instead of finely-dressed locks, baldness; instead of a wide mantle, only sackcloth wrapped round them; and instead of beauty, your captor's mark branded on your brow. Your men, O Zion, will fall by the sword; your mighty men in battle; and the gates of Zion shall sigh and wail, and she will sit, desolate, on the earth. And¹ seven women will lay hold in that day on one man, saying, 'We shall eat our own bread and wear our own clothing:'² only let us be called by thy name and be thought your wives, to take away the shame of being unmarried and childless.'"

But the people of God cannot perish for ever. The prophet has proclaimed the terrors of judgment; he must relieve the picture by once more reminding them of the glorious promises of the future.

"In that day the Branch of Jehovah, the Messianic King,³ shall be for an ornament and glory; and the fruit of the land a pride and adornment for the remnant of Israel; and he who is left in Zion, and remains in Jerusalem shall be called holy; all, I mean, enrolled among the living in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the defilement of the daughters of Zion, and cleansed the blood-guiltiness of Jerusalem by the storm of judgment and of fire. Then will Jehovah create on the whole of Mount Zion, and upon her festal assemblies, a cloud by day, and smoke, with the brightness of a flaming fire, by night, for over all her glory shall be a radiant cloud of divine protection,⁴ and this canopy shall be a pavilion, for shade from the heat by day, and for a shelter from storm and from rain."

The prophet now once more varies his address.

"Come, I will sing of Jehovah, my Beloved; I will sing a song

¹ Isaiah iv. 1 ff.

² Exod. xxi. 10. The husband was bound to give a second wife her "food and raiment," etc., no less than the first.

³ *Delitzsch*.

⁴ "A nimbus that keeps off the world from her (Zion)." Ewald, p. 195, *Propheten*. Perhaps a reference to the wilderness life.

of my Beloved about Judah, His vineyard. My Beloved had a vineyard on a very fruitful slope.¹ And He dug it well, cleared it of stones, planted it with choice vines, built a tower in its midst, to guard it, and hewed out a wine vat. Then He waited till it should yield Him grapes; but, behold, only wild grapes came!

"Now, then, ye dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard! What is there still to be done to My vineyard, that I have not done to it? Why, when I hoped it should yield grapes, has it only brought forth wild grapes? Come, then, and I will tell you what I will do with My vineyard. I will take away its hedge, that it may be eaten down; I will break down its wall, that it may be trodden under foot! I will make a clean end of it; it will neither be pruned nor hoed, but will grow over with thorns and thistles. I will also command the clouds that they do not rain on it. For the vineyard of Jehovah Sabaoth is the House of Israel; the men of Judah are His loved plantation. And He hoped for deeds of good, but, behold, there are only deeds of blood; for righteousness, and, lo, there is only the cry of the oppressed!"

Now follows, in detail, a denunciation of the evil fruits the vineyard has brought forth.

"Woe to them who join house to house, and field to field, till there is no more room, and they dwell alone in the depopulated land. In my ears has Jehovah Sabaoth spoken concerning them. Believe me, many grand houses shall become a desolation; great and fair, they shall be without an inhabitant! For ten yoke of vineyard land² will bear only a bath,³ and a homer⁴ full of seed will yield only a tenth as much!

"Woe to them who rise early in the morning, to run after strong drink; who sit late in the evening twilight till they are heated with wine! The lute and cymbal, the timbrel and flute, and wine, are their delight, but they pay no regard to the work of Jehovah, and never think what His hand is doing in our midst!

¹ "On a horn, the son of fatness," *Heb.*

² A yoke—as much as a yoke of oxen plough in a day.

³ About seven gallons.

⁴ About thirty-two pecks.

Living blindly, thus, My people will go into exile before they know it, and their rich men become hungry starvelings, and the noisy crowd burn with thirst. Therefore Sheol—the underworld—will open wide its mouth and gape its jaws beyond measure, and swallow down the glory of Jerusalem, and its drunken tumult, and its revelry, and the crowd of its merry-makers. Thus shall the mean man be abased, and the high be brought low, and proud eyes be humbled. But Jehovah Sabaoth will be exalted by His judgments on them—the holy God will show Himself holy through righteousness. And the flocks of the Arabs shall graze on their broad meadows, and wandering shepherds roam over the waste estates of the rich.¹

“Woe to them who are yoked to iniquity like oxen to a cart, and drag it after them as if with cords of ungodliness, and their sin as with cart-ropes; that say, ‘Let Jehovah hasten; let Him hurry on His work that we may see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel come on and draw near, that we may know it.’

“Woe to them who call evil good, and good evil; who call darkness light, and light darkness; who call bitter sweet, and sweet bitter! Woe to them who are wise in their own eyes; and knowing in their own esteem!

“Woe to them that are mighty to drink wine; great men to mingle strong drink; who clear the guilty for a bribe and take the rights of worthy men from them! As the tongue of the fire licks up stubble; as hay sinks down into the flame; their root shall be rottenness and their blossom fly off like dust; for they have despised the Law of Jehovah Sabaoth and contemned the word of the Holy One of Israel!

“On account of all this, the wrath of Jehovah is kindled against His people, and He shall stretch out His hand over them and smite them, till the mountains tremble, and men’s carcasses lie as offal in the streets. Yet, for all this His wrath is not appeased, but His hand is stretched out still! He lifts up a banner to call



ASSYRIAN STANDARDS.

¹ This seems the sense of the verse.

the heathen from afar,¹ and hisseth to them from the ends of the earth, as a bee-master hisseth to gather his swarm, and lo! they come with swift haste! None among them is weary or stumbles; they spare no time for slumber or sleep; the belt of their waist is never loosed, the thong of their shoes never breaks! Their arrow heads are sharpened, their bows bent; the hoofs of their horses are like flint;² their chariot wheels rush on like a whirlwind. Their roar is like the roar of a lioness; they roar like young lions and growl hoarsely, and seize their prey and carry it off, and no one can rescue it. And they shall roar against Judah in that day like the roaring of the sea, and when men look over the earth there will be thick darkness and sorrow; the light will be veiled by the darkening clouds!"

This magnificent oration was lost on the weak Ahaz. His terror at the invasion of Pekah and Rezin, and at the attacks of Edom and the Philistines, had spread, moreover, to the people, till their "hearts were moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind."³ The king, as a last hope, contemplated calling in Assyrian aid, and thus bringing to his very doors the dreaded enemy whom his father and grandfather had valiantly kept at a distance. In this critical conjuncture Isaiah once more came forward. Prudence, calmness, and trust in Jehovah were above all things necessary for Ahaz. He must do nothing rashly. Reflection would show that foes already so weak, and now threatened by Tiglath-pileser,⁴ could not succeed, if met courageously, and the prophet, besides, knew, from Divine assurance, that Jehovah would overthrow any attempts against Jerusalem and the

¹ The Assyrians.

² Horses were not shod in antiquity. The hardness of the hoof was therefore of vital importance. Hence Homer's "brazen-footed horses." A horse's hoof, I am informed by a competent authority, grows very hard when it has never been shod.

³ Isaiah vii. 2.

⁴ The same as Pul. This is to be kept in mind.

House of David. The city was still safe from capture by a sudden attack; indeed, the watchful confidence of Isaiah and his friends guaranteed this.

Resolved to urge his convictions on Ahaz, in the hopes of deterring him from his meditated action, which he knew would be ruinous, Isaiah went out with his son, who bore the symbolic name of Shear-Jashub—"a remnant shall return" (to Jehovah)—to meet the king, who was apparently accustomed to drive out along the Joppa road on the west side of Zion, past the "upper pool," now the Birket Mamilla. An aqueduct from this ran east towards the town, and close to the end of this, where it leaves the pool, was a field, then, as now, used by the citizens, on account of its nearness to the water, as a washing and bleaching ground,¹ and by the fullers for felting and cleansing their newly-woven woollen cloths. Here, outside the walls, the prophet, as he expected, encountered Ahaz, and having stopped his chariot, proceeded to deliver to him his Divine commission.

"Take heed,"² said he, "that you keep calm. Do not fear or be faint-hearted on account of these two fag ends of smoking fire-brands; for the rage of Rezin and Syria, or of the king of Samaria,

¹ *Delitzsch*, p. 125. Furrer (*Bib. Lex.* vol. v. p. 468) thinks this conduit was the one which was discovered within the last few years running underground from north to south, below the present north gate, and emptying itself into a huge subterranean double reservoir or pool close to the ancient fortress Antonia. It was the spring of this, Furrer supposes, that Hezekiah stopped, or hid. It has not yet been discovered outside the gates. The "fuller's field," he and Menke (*Bib. Atlas*, pl. VI.) place on the north-east of the city not on the west. Dr. Young also thinks it was on the north. *Dict. of Bible*, vol. i. p. 636. In the text I have adopted Delitzsch's view, as we know of a pool in that case, but not in the other.

² Isaiah vii.

that son of Remaliah, a low-born man. Have no fear though Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have planned evil against you, saying, 'Let us go up against Judah and distress it, and force the passes, and conquer it for ourselves, and put the son of Tabeal—a Syrian—as king in Jerusalem.' You may be perfectly at ease, for thus saith the Lord Jehovah: 'The scheme shall neither stand, nor succeed. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin, and within sixty-five years Ephraim shall be broken as a nation.' And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria, Remaliah's son.' If you and Judah have no faith in Jehovah your kingdom shall not continue, any more than that of Ephraim."

To this dignified counsel Ahaz seems to have given no reply; at least, none is recorded. He had a secret in his breast which he dared not divulge to Isaiah. The invisible help of Jehovah, and the distant fate of Ephraim, were of no moment to him. He had determined to call in the aid of Assyria. But the grace of God would not cast off as yet even such an unworthy son of David.

"If you wish a sign that I speak for Jehovah," resumed the prophet, therefore, urged by a Divine impulse, "ask one from Him; He is your God. Ask it to be given from the underworld of Sheol or from the heavens above." But Ahaz, affecting a humility he rarely showed in his daily life, declined the invitation: "He would not ask, nor put Jehovah thus to the test." Isaiah was thus

¹ This is a very remarkable passage. Even after its fall in 722, Samaria was quite a respectable power, with which Assyria had to reckon. It is last mentioned as a kingdom in the Assyrian records of the year B.C. 673. Soon after this, an Assyrian prefect of Samaria had taken the place of the now suppressed kings. Counting 65 years, from 734 or 736, when Isaiah met Ahaz, we are brought to 671 or 673, which may well have been the very year when Samaria finally ceased to be a people. See *Delitzsch*, p. 129. *Cheyne*, vol. i. p. 44. *Smith's Assurbanipal*, p. 36.

left to continue the conference. He no longer, however, addressed Ahaz individually, but through him, the collective royal family, who in their different branches, as in Egypt, were a very numerous and powerful¹ body, and engrossed the high offices of the State, especially the judicial functions.² Turning to those in the royal escort, he thus began:

"Hear, I pray you, ye House of David!³ Is it too small a matter for you to weary me, a man, by paying no heed to my words; will you also weary my God by refusing to believe without seeing, and when a sign is offered you, refusing to accept it? Yet Jehovah Himself, in pity, will give you a sign, unasked. 'Behold the Virgin⁴ is with child and will bear a son, and will call his name Immanuel. When he is old enough to choose between evil and good he shall have only curdled milk and honey⁵ to eat. For before he knows either evil or good, the land of both the kings of whom you are in such mortal terror shall be laid waste. Still more, Jehovah will bring on thee and on thy people, and on thy father's House, for thy alliance with Assyria in place of trusting in God, days such as have not come since the time

¹ *Delitzsch*, p. 130. *Cheyne*, vol. i. p. 46.

² Jer. xxi. 11, 12.

³ Isa. v. 13 ff.

⁴ "The Virgin." *Delitzsch*. *Ewald*. *Key*. *Louth*. *Sept*. *Pesh. Vulgate*. "The damsel." *Naegelsbach*. *Hitzig*. *Noyes*. "The young woman." *Cheyne*. The arguments for and against the Messianic import of this sign are given in *Cheyne*. I agree with him in regarding it as Messianic. See *Cheyne*, vol. i. pp. 47, 48. The discussion in *Delitzsch* is the best and fullest from the accepted orthodox point of view, which I think the right one.

⁵ The only food left in the land. See ver. 22. The age meant depends on the sense of "knowing evil from good." A child when a few years old knows right from wrong, but the full strength of intelligent moral convictions is rather the characteristic of opening manhood. The latter would cover the dates of the destruction of Damascus and Samaria, which might well have as an indirect result, the desolation of many parts of the southern kingdom by the presence of a corps of the invaders.

when Ephraim broke away from Judah. He shall bring against thee the king of Assyria whose help you seek! And it shall come to pass on that day that Jehovah will hiss, like a bee-master to his swarm,¹ for the flies at the end of the Nile arms of Egypt, and to the bees in the land of Assyria,² and they will come, all of them, and settle in the steeply walled mountain villages, and in the clefts of the rocks, and in all the thorn bushes, and in all the pastures. In that day Jehovah shall shave with a razor, that is to be hired on the border lands of the Great River—the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet of Judah, and sweep away even the beard.³ And so utterly shall the land be wasted in that day that a man's herd and flock will be no more than a young cow—the strong grown cows having been carried off by the enemy—and two ewes; and so desolate shall it be; so grown everywhere into pasture; that the curdled milk of these will be his staple food. All, indeed, who are left in the country, then one great lonely grazing field, shall have only this and the honey of the swarming multitudes of wild bees to sustain them. Bread and wine they will not have; only thick milk and honey, without change. And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place where magnificent vineyards grew, worth each year a thousand shekels, will be overgrown with thorns and briars. And so rank and solitary will these be, that men will only venture, on account of the wild beasts lurking in them, to go among them armed with arrows and the bow, for all the land will be given up to thorns and briars. And as to the hills, once hoed and worked so carefully, the peasant will not go on them for fear of the thorns and briars.⁴ Oxen will be let

¹ In the East swarms of bees are made to settle by a hissing sound from the bee-master. They fly towards it and alight on some branch close by. See p. 306.

² Egypt is the land of flies—its moist soil favouring insect life. Assyria, with its hills and woods, was famous for its bees. *Delitzsch*.

³ The "hired razor" was Pul. But though hired directly by Ahaz, he was an unconscious instrument in the hands of Jehovah. To shave off the beard and hair of the head, was the greatest possible humiliation, and is here used as a symbol of this.

⁴ *Delitzsch*, and others.

loose on them, and they will be left for sheep and goats to tread and eat down."

The mysterious sign of the birth of Immanuel, with its near and far distant significance, embracing the speedy ruin of Syria and Israel, and the visitation of Judah herself by the Assyrians, but also looking into the remote future when the true Messiah—"God with us"—in the highest sense, should appear, did not, however, exhaust the patient tenderness of God to His people. Unwilling to cast them off, other signs were added, which Isaiah thus records :

"Then Jehovah said to me,¹ 'Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters,² so that all may be able to read it: "This is inscribed to one to be called 'Speedy plunder, early spoil,'" and take for Me as trustworthy witnesses, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah.' And I went to the prophetess and she conceived and bare a son. Then said Jehovah to me, 'Call his name "Speedy plunder, early spoil;"³ for before the boy will know enough to cry 'Father' or 'Mother,' the wealth of Damascus⁴ and the spoil of Samaria will be carried off by the armies of the king of Assyria.'

"And Jehovah proceeded to speak further to me, as follows : 'Because Israel—the northern people—despises the still flowing waters of Siloah⁵—that is, rejects dependence on Jehovah, of whose favour these waters are an emblem—and rejoices to ally itself with Rezin and with Pekah the son of Remaliah; therefore,

¹ Isa. viii. 1 ff.

² Ewald. *Delitzsch*.

³ Such complex religious names were not uncommon among the Hebrews. Thus : Jushab-hesed, "Love is returned," 1 Chron. iii. 20; Hazeleponi, "(God) is the present protection," 1 Chron. iv. 3; Romamti-ezer, "I have praised the help," 1 Chron. xxv. 4. The names of many of the Assyrian kings are also of this kind.

⁴ Damascus fell in 732. The eastern provinces of Samaria were plundered two years earlier.

⁵ The brook under the walls of Jerusalem is used as a symbol of the city and temple.

behold! the Lord will bring on them the flood of the great and mighty river;¹—that is, the king of Assyria and all his forces;—and it shall swell over all its channels, and overflow all its banks, and sweep on through Israel and Syria, even to Judah, flooding and streaming on till it reaches the necks of men, and the spreading out of its waters shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.²

“Put forth your rage O ye Syrians and people of Israel; ye shall soon be dismayed! Mark it, all ye far off places of the earth! Gird yourselves, ye foes—Damascus and Samaria. Ye shall soon be in dismay! Make your plans to take Jerusalem itself, after overrunning the land; they will come to nothing. Give the command; it shall not be carried through, for ‘God is with us.’”

“For thus has Jehovah spoken to me, laying His hand mightily on me, and warning me not to go in the way of this people. ‘Ye shall not dignify what this people call a “league” or “plot” against Me and the House of David, with that name; nor shall ye fear Syria and Samaria, the objects of their terror, nor let them be your dread. Honour Jehovah Sabaoth alone, as the Holy One; let Him alone be your fear and your dread. In that case He will be a refuge for you—and show Himself holy by protecting you. But to both the Houses of Israel, who have rejected Him, He will be a stone to strike against and a rock for stumbling; to the inhabitants of Jerusalem a gin and a net. Many among them shall stumble at it and fall, and be broken and snared, and taken!’⁴ I, Jehovah, will show Myself One in opposing whom man rushes to his own ruin!

“Bind up the roll on which you have written My words; seal up My sayings, and give them to My faithful ones, such as Uriah

¹ Euphrates.

² Assyria flooded and destroyed Syria and Israel entirely. Judah was invaded, but Jerusalem, like its head, rose above the waters, and the land was saved in the end, for a time. Isaiah thinks of “Immanuel” (chapter vii. 14) as a pledge of this deliverance. “God is with” Judah.

³ News of the approach of the Assyrians reached the Syrians and Israelites when they were besieging Jerusalem.

⁴ In the Assyrian invasions.

and Zechariah,¹ to be kept as a witness of My truth when the evil days come.'

"As for me," continues the prophet, speaking for himself, "I wait in firm hope on Jehovah, the Help and Deliverer. He hides His face now from the House of Jacob, but He will lift on it the light of His countenance once more, ere long. In Him shall I hope. Behold I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me are pledges and signs from Jehovah Sabaoth, who dwells on Mount Zion. Our very names, given us by Him,² are unfulfilling promises. Mine is 'the salvation of God'; those of my children are 'A remnant shall return,' 'God with us,' and 'Speedy plunder, early spoil.' When, therefore, they say to you, whoever you be, 'Ask at the consultants of the dead, and at the wizards that chirp and mutter their spells,' give them this answer: 'Should not a people enquire at their own God? What folly to seek the living Jehovah by consulting the shades of dead men—to seek guidance for living men from ghosts! Shall a people which, like Judah, has for its God the living Jehovah, turn from Him to consult dead idols?'³ Instead of this, let your watchword be: 'To the teaching and testimony'; go to them, not to idols or sorcerers; go to the prophets, the spokesmen for God. If men will not accept this word, no dawn of hope is before them.'⁴

"In the evil days when they are driven from their homes they will wander through the land, hard pressed and hungry; and when thus famished, they shall murmur bitterly in their hearts and curse their king and their God.⁵ And whether they look up to the heavens, or over the land, behold, there will be only sorrow and gloom; distress and darkness around; distress and darkness in their own souls!

"But this remnant of the people, saved by God for Himself, shall not be thus in misery for ever.⁶ For it will not always be dark with them, though thick gloom hangs over them now. In years lately past Jehovah brought sorrow to Zebulon and Naphthali, by the invasion of the Assyrians. But hereafter He will bring

¹ Isa. viii. 2.

² Isa. viii. 3.

³ The senses of various versions are incorporated in the text.

⁴ Delitzsch.

⁵ Delitzsch understands Jehovah; Hitzig, the idol gods.

⁶ Isa. ix. 1.

them to honour throughout the regions on the way to the sea—Naphtali,—the west side of the Lake of Galilee, the country beyond Jordan, and the half-heathen district of Kabul or Galilee far north, on the waters of Huleh,¹ from which the inhabitants have been so recently carried off into captivity. The people that walked in darkness see a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, on them has light shone. Thou, O Jehovah, hast multiplied the nation once more: Thou hast prepared for it great joy. They rejoice before Thee like the joy of a harvest-home,² or as the warrior when he divides the spoil. For Thou hast broken their grievous yoke, and the stick of their taskmasters, with which their shoulder was beaten, as in the day of Gideon's great triumph over Midian! For all the harness of the soldier noisily girding himself for battle,³ and the war-cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, and fuel for the fire. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall rest upon His shoulder, and His name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.⁴ Of the greatness of His rule and of its prosperity there is no end, on the throne of David and over his empire, to establish and to uphold it, by justice and righteousness, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah Sabaoth, on behalf of the people whom He loves, 'will perform this.'"

Thus alternately denouncing the sins of his own people, predicting their impending judgment by God; encouraging them to reliance on Him as their surest dependence even politically; foretelling the defeat of their enemies, and the final glory of the remnant who should survive the impending national calamities, Isaiah

¹ Pul carried off the Israelites from these regions, B.C. 734. See p. 233.

² In Neil's *Pal. Explored*, p. 106, a harvest home is described.

³ Delitzsch has "for the war shoes (boots) of the soldier rushing to the noise of battle," etc. I prefer the translation of Gesenius and Hitzig, which is given.

⁴ Delitzsch sees in this great prophecy of the Messiah, our Lord, the child Immanuel of chap. vii. Even Hitzig translates the words "Mighty God" as we do, "starker Gott."

must have been a great power in the State. But his majestic eloquence and the Divine authority with which he spoke had no influence on Ahaz and his court. An alliance with the king of Assyria was concluded, and a gift far greater than the country could afford, was gathered together and sent him, to secure his active help. The silver and gold in the temple treasury, and even the sacred vessels and all the money in the royal exchequer, hardly sufficed.¹ Meanwhile, Isaiah was unceasing in his activity. Day by day, apparently, he sought to influence Jerusalem for good; warning or cheering the citizens by Divine promises, if, only, they returned heartily to Jehovah. The approaching ruin of Israel for its wickedness and its hostility to Judah could not in such a time be overlooked. A fragment of one address on this great topic is still extant.

"Jehovah,"² says the prophet, "has sent a word to Jacob; it has descended on Israel, and the whole people—Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria—will soon realize its power, in spite of their arrogance and pride. Past judgments have not humbled them; those to come will do so. 'Our brick houses,'³ say they, 'have fallen down, but we shall build with squared stones; the common sycamore trees have been hewn down, we shall use cedar 'in their stead.' But Jehovah has raised up the princes⁴ of Rezin⁵ against them, and stirred up other enemies. Syria

¹ 2 Kings xvi. 8. 2 Chron. xxviii. 24. ² Isa. ix. 8-x. 4.

³ Sun-dried bricks were probably used then, as now, in building the houses of Palestine.

⁴ Bought at a great price from the Phenicians who held the cedar forests of Lebanon. ⁵ Lit. "oppressors."

⁶ Delitzsch refers this to the Assyrians. Knobel renders it "the vassal princes of Rezin." No attack of Philistia on Israel is recorded, but both Syria and Philistia, as Assyrian tributaries, would be required to send auxiliaries to the army of the Great King.

on the east, Philistia on the west, devour Israel with open mouth. But yet he has not repented, and, therefore, notwithstanding all this, God's anger is not turned away from Him, but His hand is stretched out still!

"But the people do not turn to Him that smites them, nor do they seek Jehovah of Hosts. Therefore Jehovah will cut off from Israel, head and tail, the palm-branch and the rush, in one day. The Elder and the dignitary, he is the head, and the false prophets who teach lies they are the tail.¹ The leaders of this people have become false guides, and those they guide are led to misfortune and ruin. Therefore the Lord has not spared² their youth who go forth to war, and has not pitied their orphans and widows, for they are all evil and reprobate, and every mouth speaks ungodliness. On account of all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.

"For wickedness flames up like fire (in outbursts of civil war and anarchy)³; it burns up the worthless thorns and thistles,⁴ and catches in the thickets of the forest, spreading wider and wider, and rises in whirling smoke. Through the wrath of Jehovah or Hosts the land is burnt up, and the people become fuel for the fire; no man spares his brother. One snatches up what he can on the right hand and still is hungry; and eats on the left and has not enough; he will even eat the flesh of his own arm in his starving madness.⁵ Manasseh shall fight against Ephraim; Ephraim against Manasseh; the two together against Judah. On account of all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still!

¹ These words are omitted, as an interpolation, by Gesenius, Cheyne, Hitzig, Diestel, Ewald, Knobel and Kneucker. Naegelsbach and others defend them as pointing, with "the elders and dignitaries," to the second class of leaders in Israel.

² *Knobel. Ligarde.*

³ After Pekah's death; from 739 to 731. *Hitzig.*

⁴ The ungodly.

⁵ A picture of general misery, or perhaps of intestine feuds in which the people destroy each other to the uttermost. The tribes loosened from their union by repeated revolutions, reverted more and more to their old isolation and opposition after the violent accession of Pekah.

"Woe to them that draw up unjust decisions; who inscribe oppressive ordinances on the public tablets,¹ to keep the poor from getting justice; to rob the poor of My people of their legal rights, that they may prey on the widow and spoil the orphan! What will ye do in the day of visitation and in the storm of ruin that comes from afar? To whom will ye flee for help? And where will you store your wealth to keep it safe? Nothing will be left but to crouch among the captives, or lie dead among the slain. On account of all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still!"²

But if Israel were thus sternly denounced before the listening multitudes of Jerusalem, their other foes from Damascus, now wasting the land, were not spared. Against them all the great prophet lifted up his voice in a special "burden."³

"Damascus, said he,⁴ shall perish from the number of cities, and become a tumbled heap of ruins! ⁵ The towns of Aroer⁶—the East Jordan country—shall be forsaken. They shall be feeding places for flocks which shall lie down in them; no man remaining to make them afraid. The fortress⁷ will be destroyed from Ephraim and the kingdom from Damascus, and it will be with the remnant of Syria that survives, as with the doomed glory of the children of Israel, says Jehovah Sabaoth. For it will come to pass in that day that the glory of Jacob will be humbled and the fatness of his flesh become lean.⁸ For the enemy shall be

¹ Perhaps alluding to their being written on tablets, as a kind of publication. So Knobel and Diestel. In this case, a curious light is thrown on the culture of the northern kingdom.

² Isa. ix. 8—x. 4. ³ Lit. *lifting up*. Prov. xxx. 1—*prophecy*.

⁴ Isa. xvii. 1-11.

⁵ This does not preclude its being gradually rebuilt, as indeed it was. The chapter must have been written before 733.

⁶ There was one Aroer in Reuben, on the Arnon; another, in Gad, near Rabbath Ammon. Aroer means "the naked," "the laid bare."
⁷ Samaria.

⁸ Many will be killed or carried off by the enemy, and the remnant reduced to misery in the desolated land.

like a reaper who gathers together the stalks of the standing corn and cuts off the ears; or like one who reaps the thick growing ears in the rich Valley of the Giants, close by Jerusalem.¹ Yet a gleanings will be left as at the shaking down of the olive berries; ² two or three berries on the uppermost bough; four or five that could not be reached, in the thick branches, says Jehovah, the God of Israel.

"In that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes will be lifted to the Holy One of Israel. And He will not look to the altars—the work of his hands—the altars before the sacred calves; nor will he have respect to the Asherah³ or Baal images which his own fingers have made. In that day will the fortified cities of Ephraim be like the mouldering ruins of the old Canaanite towns in the depths of the woods, or on the tops of the hills; the ruins of the towns deserted at the Conquest, in terror of the advancing hosts of Joshua; and the land shall be waste. For thou, Israel, hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy stronghold—thy protecting Rock-fortress, Jehovah! Therefore didst thou lay out thy soil for the plants thou lovest—the lewd gardens of thy idols—and set in it the vines of the alien⁴; and put a hedge round it, and ere long brought thy sowing to flower. But the harvest will be lost in the day of thy grief and desperate sorrow."⁵

These gloomy prophecies were speedily fulfilled. Rejoiced to receive the homage of the grandson of the great Uzziah who had opposed him so stoutly, and eager to crush Damascus and Israel, now weakened more than ever by their invasion of Judah, Pul hastened to the

¹ See Furrer's account of its fertility. *Palästina*, p. 184.

² Gathered by beating the branches. They are harvested while still unripe, as the oil thus got from them is finer.

³ Asherah—goddess of fertility. So called by the Hebrew women, in the belief that she secured their having children. *Diestel*, p. 148. The words "Baal images" are lit. "sun gods," and embrace the sun, the moon, and the hosts of heaven. Deut. iv. 19; xvii. 3. Jer. viii. 2. Ewald translates the words, "idol groves and sun-pillars."

⁴ Gave thyself up to foreign gods.

⁵ Ewald.

rescue of Ahaz. It was a great matter to have him thus dependent, as it opened the way for a march into Egypt.

At once therefore, in 734, as we have seen,¹ the Assyrian armies set out on their march to the territories of Damascus. Terrified at their approach, Rezin and Pekah precipitately retreated from Judah and prepared to defend themselves; but at the first battle Rezin was utterly defeated; his charioteers made prisoners, his chariots destroyed; the horses of the cavalry captured; the archers, spearmen, and shield-bearing corps, indeed the whole army, scattered or taken. Rezin fled, alone, "like a deer," from the battle-field, to save his life, and threw himself into Damascus, trusting to its massive walls to defend him. Thither Pul at once advanced, shutting him up, as he tells us, like a caged bird. But the fortifications were too strong for a sudden attack, and after cutting down all the trees round the city for siege purposes, and crucifying the host of prisoners he had captured, the Great King himself marched off to devastate the neighbouring country, leaving a sufficient force to maintain the investment of Damascus. It was now that, as already related, he laid waste sixteen districts round the Syrian capital, carrying off men, women, children, flocks, herds, and all the property of the inhabitants worth seizing. The whole kingdom of Rezin, indeed, was subdued, Damascus alone excepted. It still held out.²

The catastrophe predicted by successive prophets, and already noticed,³ now burst upon the northern kingdom. The country north and west of the Lake of Galilee, forming the territory of Naphtali and Zebulon, and the fertile provinces of Bashan and Gilead, east of the Jordan, were

¹ See p. 231 ff.

² Smith's *Assyria*, p. 83. Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 153.

³ See p. 233.

overrun, their cities destroyed, their people slain or deported, and the whole substance of the land either consumed or swept away. The cities round Samaria, and many places west of the Jordan, were also attacked; Samaria alone, like Damascus, rising, as yet, above the flood of victorious invasion. There Pekah took refuge, saving his throne for the moment, by humble submission, but Assyrian officials were set over the territory torn from him.¹

The Philistines next drew on themselves the wrath of the conqueror.² They had apparently fought against Judah, as allies of Syria and Israel. Hanno, king of Gaza, fled to Egypt at the approach of the Assyrians, but the city was plundered, and its gods borne off; Pul raising in it his own statue as a token of his conquest.³ Ekron and Ashdod also fell, and the king of Askelon destroyed himself, to escape a death of torture from the enemy. Imposing a heavy tribute on these cities, Pul crossed the Negeb to Edom, the stronghold of the fiercest enemy of Ahaz, and after subduing it, turned his arms against the queen of an Arab kingdom still farther south. She, like the other local rulers, had been a member of the Syrian league; but multitudes of her people were now carried off, with 30,000 camels and 20,000 oxen. Even Lower Egypt, long torn by intestine wars, forthwith sent an embassy to Pul, and a vassal king

¹ Schrader, p. 145. Smith's *Assyria*, pp. 83-85. The inconceivable sufferings caused by an Assyrian invasion may be in part realized by the record left of the cruelties of King Assur-nazir-pal about 150 years before, in his Mesopotamian wars. See vol. ii. pp. 399, 400.

² These details are repeated here, though already noticed, pp. 229-234. It seemed better to recall them to the reader, that the circumstances of Isaiah's life might be realized.

³ Schrader, p. 145.

was set over it.¹ Moab and Ammon, which lay on his way back to Damascus, were the last conquests of this great campaign.

Returning triumphantly from it, the Great King had the satisfaction of seeing the fall of the Syrian capital, in 752, after a siege of nearly two years. Rezin having been put to death, and vast multitudes of the people sent off to Kir, Pul celebrated this crowning victory by holding a great court or durbar in Damascus. The subject monarchs from far and near were required to honour this with their attendance, to flatter the glory of their master. They came, therefore, from every part, doubtless in great state, bringing the costliest gifts and tribute their ruined countries could yield. Among others, the princes of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Hamath, and the Philistine cities, assembled, with many more.² The name of Pekah of Samaria is not on the list, which is unfortunately mutilated, but that of Ahaz is given. Taking with him all the gold he could gather from the treasures of the temple and his own exchequer and those of the royal family, he appeared with the other tributaries.³

Less than three years before, Isaiah had re-enforced, probably with additions of his own, ancient prophecies respecting Moab—now so terribly fulfilled. As no passage in his writings presents a more vivid picture of the horrors that surrounded Judah, I give it in full.⁴

¹ Smith's *Assyria*, p. 86.

² Schrader, p. 147.

³ 2 Kings xvii. 10, 18. 2 Chron. xxviii. 21, 24.

⁴ Knobel, Diestel, Cheyne and most others think this passage, chaps. xv. and xvi., an old prophecy—perhaps Jonah's—referring primarily to the conquests of Moab by Jeroboam II., with two verses added by Isaiah (xvi. 13, 14). Knobel fancies it refers to Pul's invasion; Cheyne leaves the question open. But no period suits better than that of Pul. Delitzsch refers it to this, and

"In one night," says the prophet, "Ar¹ of Moab is stormed,² is ruined; in one night Kir³ of Moab is stormed and ruined; the same night saw the taking of both! ⁴Bajith⁴ and Dibon⁵ have gone up to the high places to weep and supplicate the gods. Moab wails at Nebo⁶ and Medeba.⁶ All heads are shaved in token of mourning; all beards cut off. In the streets they wrap themselves in sackcloth; on the house tops, and in the spaces before the gates, they lament aloud, with flowing tears! Heshbon⁷ and Elealeh⁸ cry out: their lamentation is heard even at Jahaz;⁹ the warriors of Moab break out in wailing; their souls tremble within them!

"My heart cries aloud for Moab. Her fugitives flee far south, even to Zoar¹⁰ and the third Eglath;¹¹ they go weeping up the ascent of Luhith;¹² on the way to Horonaim¹³ they raise a wild cry at the destruction that has broken over them! For the flowing springs of Nimrim¹⁴ are stopped up; the herbage round them is

does not hint at its possibly earlier origin. Knobel's objection, that the invasion is said to have come from the north, may be removed by supposing it to have been made by a corps sent south from Damascus by Pul.

¹ Ar lay on the north border of Moab, on the Arnon.

² Isaiah xv. xvi.

³ Kir—now Kerak—was on the south border, 9 miles south of Rabbah.

⁴ Delitzsch.

⁵ North or north-west of Dibon.

⁶ The present Diban, where the Moabite stone was found. It lies in a low plain, less than 3 miles north of the central part of the Arnon.

⁷ The present Nabab, 9 miles south of Heshbon.

⁸ In the same plain as Dibon.

⁹ Heshbon is on the Mismor or upland pastures of Moab, north of Medeba. Elealeh is about 2 miles north-west of it. Heshbon is 3,000 feet above the sea. Jazer or Jahsa is put, by Kiepert, 15 miles south of Heshbon.

¹⁰ South-east of the Dead Sea.

¹¹ It is not uncommon in the East to distinguish places of the same name by a number. ¹² On the way to Zoar.

¹³ A place known for its "two caves" (Horonaim), beyond Luhith.

¹⁴ Near the south border of Moab.

withered; the grass is gone; every green thing has perished! The sons of Moab flee from the wasted lands with their goods and all that they prize, to the far south, to the Spring of the Wilderness.¹ For wailing has spread round all the borders of Moab; its lamentation has reached to Eglaim² on the south, and the Terebinth Springs³ in the north. The waters of Dimon⁴ are full of blood, shed by the foe. But I will bring on it fresh sorrows; for I will set over the remnant left of Moab and the rest of the land, a ruler who shall be strong and fierce as a lion.⁵ "Send ye your tribute lambs once more to your ancient lord,⁶ the king of Judah, that ye may have his protection, ye fugitives of Moab who have escaped to Edom—send them, from Petra to which ye have fled—through the wilderness of the south, to the Mount of the daughter of Zion—Jerusalem!" Thus the chiefs of Moab advise their brethren. Then shall the daughters of Moab⁷ who have fled like homeless birds, like nestlings scared from their nest, to the gorge of the Arnon,⁸ hasten to Jerusalem, and there say—"Take counsel and help us, make a decision in our favour, give us protection, that its shadow, even in the glaring noon, may be like that of night, which securely conceals and guards; hide those driven out from their country; do not give up those wandering homeless! Let the outcasts of Moab dwell with thee. Be thou a covert to them from the spoiler. For henceforth Moab will no longer be an oppressor; violence is past; the treaders down are gone out of the land—from this time friendly relations will reign with Jerusalem. Through such mercy shall the throne be established. And there shall sit in

¹ The Wady el Ahsa, between Moab and Edom, reaching to the Dead Sea.

² At the south end of the Dead Sea. It means "the two ponds."

³ *Bertheau*. Num. xxi. 16, the Springs of the Heroes, or Princes.

⁴ Not known.

⁵ *Delitzsch* thinks this was a king of Judah. But no king of Judah ruled Moab after Pul's time. *Knobel* and *Diessel* fancy it points to an unknown ruler. But see next verse.

⁶ 2 Kings iii. 4.

⁷ Its village or town populations.

⁸ The chief stream of Moab. See vol. ii. p. 356.

the tabernacle of David a judge, both seeking right and skilled in judgment.'"¹

But the people of Judah distrust these professions and treat them as only the language of passing despair. Moab assumes that the stern rule of Judah, which roused it to rebellion in former days, is gone, and that the reigning king will make his dominion over them permanent by his gentle uprightness. But this attempt to blame Judah for the past and to excuse their own unfaithfulness does not deceive. From his lofty throne, the ruler of Jerusalem answers them. Their words have been heard, but if Moab be still so little humbled or ready to own its past guilt, no help can be granted. Even the prophet, much as it pains him, feels it must be so.²

The answer is, therefore, returned.

"We have heard of the pride of Moab, of haughty Moab; of his arrogance, his insolence, his airs, his false and idle boastings, and we distrust you. We reject your entreaty."

"Then shall Moab wail for Moab—the whole land shall wail; for the raisin-cakes³ of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn, utterly broken-hearted! For the vineyards of Heshbon are withered; the lords of the nations have broken down the chosen plants of

¹ *Knobel and Diestel*. Delitzsch thinks the prophet anticipates that after the enemy had gone from Moab, Judah will take it under her protection and reign with brotherly love over it. Knobel supposes that the embassy to Jerusalem asks leave to live in Edom—Judah having then the power there—and that the request is granted and promises of favour made. Cheyne fancies the king of Judah is the Messiah, and that the peace and love will come under His reign. This also is the view of Delitzsch. But it does not exclude the primary historical sense given in the text.

² This is the best explanation I can give of a passage which every version translates differently.

³ Hosea iii. 1 Kerak is still very rich in its grapes.

the vine of Sibmah,¹ whose branches reach, north, to Jazer; eastwards, to the wilderness; west and south, to the Dead Sea. Therefore I will mingle my tears with the weeping of Jazer² for the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh, for upon thy fruit harvest and vintage the wild cry of the enemy has fallen! Gladness is taken away, and joy from the garden-land, and in the vineyards there is no singing, or shouting; no treaders tread grapes in thy wine-presses; their cry of rejoicing have I made to cease. For all this, my heart sounds like a lute for Moab; my bosom for Kir-haresh.³ Nor shall any supplication of Moab to its idol gods be of avail. It shall come to pass, when Moab appears, in vain, on her high places and wearies herself there, and then betakes herself to her idol-temple to pray, she shall not prevail. Then shall Moab be ashamed of Chemosh and turn to Jehovah.⁴

"This is the word that Jehovah has spoken concerning Moab of old. But now Jehovah has spoken, saying, in three years,

¹ Close to Heshbon. Sibmah was the centre of the vine-growing districts of Moab.

² A Gadite town, 15 miles north from Heshbon. *Kiepert*. The Wady Sar (formerly Jazer) still produces immense quantities of grapes and raisins.

³ Kir-haresh or Kir-haraseth is the same as Kir—now, Kerak. Kir Moab means the Hill or Fortress of Moab. The other means the "fortress of burnt brick," or in Palmer's opinion, "Hill-town." *Desert of Exodus*, p. 367. Furrer's description of Kir deserves quotation. "Lofty heights dominate Kir almost all round, though it is, itself, fully 3,000 feet above the sea. From the ruins of the castle there is a glorious view westward, over the Dead Sea, whose blue waters spread themselves picturesquely in their deep yellow basin of rocks. The highlands of Judah, rising behind in great terraces, form the background to the landscape. Mount Olivet and the hills round Bethlehem are clearly seen. Great streams foam down the gorges north and south of the town, till the beginning of summer. Olives, figs, and orange trees flourish on artificial terraces on the steep slopes." *Bib. Lex.*, vol. iii. p. 534.

⁴ These words are restored here from Jer. xlviii. 13, by Ewald and Cheyne.

strictly, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be dishonoured, with all its great multitude, and the remnant will be very small and feeble."

While all this misery was wasting the land north and south, an Assyrian general, or Rabshakeh, had been besieging Tyre, which at last fell in 732, and had to pay a fine of 150 talents of gold, nominally equal to £400,000 of our money, but then worth many times more in purchasing value. In 731 Pul was fighting in Babylonia, and having once more conquered it, proclaimed himself its king, forcing Merodach Baladan I., who had claimed the throne, to do homage to him as king of South Chaldaea. In 729¹ Pekah's reign as an Assyrian vassal came to a sudden close at Samaria by the conspiracy of Hosea, the last king of Israel; but the reign of Pul was also near its end. The year 728 saw the death of Ahaz and the accession of Hezekiah in Judah, and in the next year, 727, the career of the Assyrian conqueror was over. So short a time had changed the chief actors in the great drama, in Assyria, Samaria, and Jerusalem! The Assyrian empire now stretched from Persia to Egypt, a distance of 1,200 miles, and from the Persian Gulf to Armenia, a distance of 800 miles. It was fast reaching the period of its greatest glory.

A short fragment of Isaiah, from the "year in which king Ahaz died,"² brings back the vividness with which men felt the great incidents of Pul's recent invasion. The Philistines had been beaten to the ground by the great conqueror, but they retained, under Assyrian vassalage, a number of the towns of Judah with their petty districts. They might hope that the weakness of

¹ Schrader, p. 150.

² If the inscription be genuine. But this is questioned. *Knobel. Diestel. Ewald.*

the reign of Ahab would be perpetuated in that of his successor, but Isaiah heralds the advent of the new sovereign by a prediction of his glory.

"Rejoice not ye districts that make up Philistia¹ that the rod which has smitten you is broken.² For out of the root of the serpent there shall come forth a basilisk;³ its fruit shall be terrible as a flying dragon. The poorest of the poor in Judah shall eat his food in peace, and the needy shall lie down secure, but I will kill thy root with famine and the survivors will perish by the sword of the basilisk king. Howl! O gate; cry aloud, O city; melt with fear O whole Philistia; for out of the north cometh a smoke—the dust clouds of an advancing army, and the destroying fires which it spreads on its march, and there are no stragglers in the host. But Jerusalem shall be safe. When the envoys of the Great King—the King of Nations—shall come to her, they will be told that 'Jehovah has founded Zion, and that in her the afflicted fugitives of His people can find refuge.'"

¹ Isaiah xiv. 28-32. The *Sept.* has "all ye alien races."

² (P) That Judah is now weak.

³ (P) Hezekiah. Or the references may be to Pul's death, and to Sargon his redoubtable successor. The "basilisk" = "royal" serpent, or "king of serpents"—"a small, very poisonous reptile, about a span long, almost peculiar to Africa." *Mühlau und Volck.* The Hebrew name "Tsepha" implies its making a hissing sound. Gesenius calls it a viper. Tristram says it may possibly be the great yellow viper, which is active by night. *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 275. It is large enough to swallow a leveret, and is found in Palestine.



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CHAPTER XII.

HEZEKIAH.

B.C. 724-695.

ASSYRIAN KINGS.

SARGON, B.C. 722-706.

SENNACHERIB. 705-682.

THE condition of Judah when Hezekiah, the "Strength of Jehovah," ascended the throne, at the age of twenty,¹ on the death of his father, in B.C. 728, was sad in the extreme. The political situation was humiliating. The ruinous tribute paid to Assyria by Ahaz was expected to be continued. The court party were in favour of its being so, as at once a protection to the State, and a bond of union with the Great King, whose slaves or pensioners they were in heart. Pride and oppression had developed themselves in a habitual disregard of justice, and a lawless violence towards the mass of the community. The numerous members of the royal family and the nobility monopolized the administration of justice, and encroached even on the power of the king. The common citizen, the peasant, and the shepherd trem-

¹ In 2 Kings xviii. 2, Hezekiah is said to have been twenty-five years old when he began to reign, but this seems a textual corruption for twenty, else Ahaz would have been only eleven when a father. He died at the age of thirty-six, and twenty-five from this leave eleven.



bled before them. The priests had caught the contagion of corruption, and even among the prophets a large proportion abused their office to the most selfish and dishonourable ends.¹ Indifferent as to the result, they gave forth mock revelations to the people as their patrons directed, and too often led the masses astray. The true prophets, faithful to their duty, were made to seem public enemies, while their rivals were held up as patriots. Public feeling was thus roused against the fearless and upright among the order, till a persecution, like that of Jezebel's days, seemed imminent, and the servants of God had to hide for their lives.² Still more; while the body of the people was thus impoverished; the rich, selfish and oppressive; the judges corrupt, and heathen superstition invading all ranks; the State was torn by rival factions. One party urged a treaty with Egypt; another the continuance of the Assyrian tribute, and a third stood up for national independence. Hezekiah had no light task before him to guide public affairs.

Yet he was not without a strong moral support from the better class of the population. The reformation of Jehoiada and Zechariah, followed as it was by the appearance of the new school of prophets, had aroused a deep and earnest religiousness in the hearts of not a few. The words of Joel, Amos and Hosea had been pondered; the teachings of the ancient oracles more fervently studied, and a religious feeling excited, destined to yield the richest spiritual fruits. Amidst these influences Isaiah had risen, the prince of the prophets—and to extend them, by instructing a body of disciples, was one of the great objects of his life. It was no longer necessary to form separate communities, to keep those who were

¹ Isa. ix. 13-15. Micah iii. 11; iv. 5.

² Isa. xxix. 21. Hos. ix. 8. Isa. xxx. 20.

705-682.

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being trained for the prophetic office apart from the general population. They could now live in their own homes, under the protection of the temple, and gather round their master in its courts. They no longer claimed to anoint successors to kings, or be the prime movers in violent political revolutions. Instead of the stormy zeal of their predecessors they sought to develop the humbler virtues of gentleness, patience, and lowly devotion to God. Men knew them as the "meek of the earth," and "the poor,"¹ who strove rather to bear injustice and suffering with lowly trust in God, than vindicate their personal wrongs. To such a body the best men of the nation looked as the hope of its nobler spiritual future. The thought of them cheered Isaiah in his deepest sorrow at the guilt and wickedness of his countrymen, and the judgments impending in consequence. "I hope in Jehovah," says he; "though He has hidden His face from the House of Jacob, yet will I hope in Him. Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs and (good) portents in Israel."² "When the House of Jacob see that the disciples in their midst honour the Holy God, they also will sanctify and honour Him."³

The personal character and endowments of Hezekiah were illustrious. Ready for war when necessary, and alike brave and skilful in its conduct, he was more inclined to the gentle arts of peace. Though he could wrest cities from the Philistines and defend Jerusalem with resolution and ability, he gave his heart rather to the promotion of the internal welfare of his kingdom. Fond of agriculture and pastoral pursuits, like his grandfather Uzziah, he had great herds and flocks in the

¹ Isa. xi. 4; xxix. 19.² Isa. viii. 17, 18. *Graetz.*³ Isa. xxix. 23. *Graetz.*

Negeb and elsewhere,¹ and built shepherds' towers and large folds for their protection. Vineyards, oliveyards and cornfields were his delight. His tender religious sensibility, and poetic genius—the first instance of the latter since David—are seen in the hymn which he composed after his recovery from almost mortal sickness.² His love of culture displayed itself in his zeal for the preservation of the religious writings of his nation, of which their literature to a great extent consisted. Descended, apparently on his mother's side,³ from Zechariah, the favourite prophet of Uzziah, he inherited a lofty enthusiasm for the ancient faith. In direct contrast to his father, who had zealously favoured everything Assyrian, Hezekiah gave himself passionately to whatever was national, and devoted his life to the restoration of the worship of Jehovah and the purification of the land from the heathenism which Ahaz had introduced. The "Law" was his guiding star in public and private. The prophets were his honoured and cherished counsellors. As intelligent and refined as he was humble and godly, he, first, took measures to collect and arrange the Sacred Books. A Royal Commission appointed by him gathered from the lips of the people of both Israel and Judah⁴ the materials which now form the Book of Proverbs, or transcribed them from ancient manuscripts. Jewish tradition ascribes to him, further, the collecting of the Prophecies of Isaiah and the preservation of Ecclesiastes and Canticles.⁵ Nor was his reign unmarked by a brilliant literature of its own, for, besides the writings of contemporary prophets, various psalms of this period still survive in the Canon, and speak

¹ 2 Chron. xxxii. 28, 29.

² Isa. xxxviii. 9-20.

³ 2 Kings xviii. 2.

⁴ Prov. xxv. 1.

⁵ Gesenius, *Isaia*, vol. i. p. 16.

of an intellectual activity which must have shown itself in every direction. Ahaz had closed the gates of the temple; Hezekiah not only reopened them, but put the whole building in thorough repair, and revived the use of the Psalms of David and Asaph in public worship,¹ so that the multitude once more heard them sung to the rich chants and music which had delighted their forefathers, but had been long disused.² To secure the maintenance of the priests and Levites he restored the payment of the tithes fixed by the Law of Moses, including "the first fruits of corn, wine, oil, and date syrup, and of all the increase of the field."³ Without oppressing the people, his wise and upright rule kept his treasury always full, and his palace boasted of stores of spices and costly oil, and a well-appointed armoury.⁴ Jewish tradition, magnifying his fame and merits in after years, fancied that he must have been the promised Messiah; and the inspired compiler of the Second Book of Kings only reflects the universal homage of contemporary public opinion in the grand eulogium, that "he trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."⁵

As the grandson of a prophet, Hezekiah appears to have shown a bias towards the ancient religion from his early youth. The prophet Micah seems, however, to have exerted, at least in one instance, a powerful spiritual influence on him. Contrary to what had become the rule, that seer had retained in many respects the outward characteristics of the ancient school of prophets. Humble

¹ 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

² 2 Chron. xxix. 27.

³ 2 Chron. xxxi. 2, 5. Exod. xxii. 29; xxiii. 16-19. Prov. iii. 9, 10.

⁴ 2 Kings xx. 13.

⁵ 2 Kings xviii. 5.

and rustic in position compared with Isaiah, we find him wandering through the streets of Jerusalem stripped of his upper garments, and mingling his prophetic appeals and warnings with loud wails, like the deep hollow roar of the ostrich or, the piteous howl of the jackal.¹ Such an apparition, proclaiming from day to day the sins of Jerusalem, and threatening, even in the royal presence and before the court, its impending ruin, struck the king with awe,² and seems to have been the turning point of his religious life. His attendants, aghast at the intrusion of the prophet and at his daring words, would have had the offender seized and punished, but the king took the wiser course of listening to his appeals.

His first care was the burial of his unworthy father; but even in this he showed respect for popular feeling; denying the remains a place in the royal sepulchre, though he caused them to be interred within the walls of Jerusalem.³ This done, he threw open the gates of the temple in the first month of his reign, and began the repairs of the structure.⁴ Assembling the priests and Levites in the open space east of it, he enjoined them to commence its purification at once, and prepare it for the restoration of the public services. The sacred lamps had been long extinguished, and neither incense nor burnt sacrifices had been offered, but all this must be reversed. The calamities of the nation, he told them, had been the punishment of such neglect; they must now be diligent to repair it. Having first purified their own persons, they zealously carried out the royal command,

¹ Micah i. 8. *Kleinert*. "The voice of the ostrich is a deep, hollow, rumbling sound, so like the roar of a lion that even practised ears have been deceived by it." *Wood's Nat. Hist.*, vol. iii. p. 648.

² Jer. xxvi. 18.

³ 2 Chron. xxviii. 27.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxix. 3.

and in a fortnight had made the building fit for use. The "uncleanness" found in it was carried down to the Kedron and scattered on the stream; the altar of burnt-offering restored to its place, and all the temple vessels and furniture, which Ahaz had removed, made ready for their respective purposes. A sin-offering for the kingdom, the temple, and the people, was next offered by the priests, by Hezekiah's order; the choirs and instrumental bands of the Levites standing in their old places and joining in the service; the trumpets sounding, and the singers and musicians filling the air once more with the words and music of the old psalms, while the king and court united with the congregation in lowly worship. It was a worthy inauguration of a noble reign.¹

Meanwhile, the northern kingdom was passing rapidly to its fall. Hosea had ascended the throne of Samaria in 731,² three years before Hezekiah's reign began. The recent death of the conqueror, Pul, or Tiglath-pileser, had already led to a fresh revolt in Babylonia, which detained the Assyrian army in the east, and Hosea seized the opportunity thus offered, to form a league with Phenicia and other States of Palestine, and strike once more for independence. To this movement he had been craftily incited by So,³ or Schabaka, king of Egypt, of the Ethiopian dynasty, who again sought to protect himself by an uprising in Palestine, from the

¹ A hint of the moral deterioration of the priests is given in the statement, that few of them attended in comparison with the number of Levites, and that the latter were more conscientious in personal purification than their dignified brethren. 2 Chron. xxx. 3, 4. For the whole incident, see the chapter throughout.

² 729 is the year given by some for the murder of Pekah.

³ 2 Kings xvii. 4. So is also called Savah. Lenormant, *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 350. See p. 236.

dreaded advance of Assyria to the Nile.¹ But Tiglath-pileser was ere long succeeded by Shalmaneser IV., against whom no revolts were able to make head. Babylon having been again subdued, he was speedily free to turn his arms to the west, and forthwith marched towards the Mediterranean. In 724, as already stated, Tyre was invested by one corps, Samaria by another; the siege being pushed on with increased determination after Hosea had been taken prisoner and led off into captivity.² Meanwhile, in 722, while it was in progress, Shalmaneser died, and was succeeded by Sargon, one of the greatest of the Assyrian kings.

Tenacious, energetic, and gifted with military genius, the new monarch ultimately made himself master of both Tyre and Samaria, which Egypt did not attempt to help, after having led them into revolt. What their capture involved has been already described, in part; but the Assyrian sculptures add some details to the picture. To judge from the slabs in Sennacherib's palace, portraying the siege of Lachish,³ Samaria was defended by double walls, with parapets and towers, and by fortified bastions. Against these works a huge encircling mound or broad wall was raised, strongly built of stones, bricks, earth and branches of trees, and on this, battering rams and towers of attack were planted. To destroy these was the great aim of the besieged. The sculptures show the battlements and towers thronged with defenders, showering arrows, javelins, stones and blazing torches on the assailants, while the Assyrians beneath pour water with great ladles on the flaming missiles which threaten to destroy their engines. But it was all in vain. After three years of close investment and fierce attack, as we

¹ Well described by Maspero, pp. 389, 390.

² See p. 233.

³ Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 149.

have seen, the capital of the northern kingdom fell, and then followed the usual sequel of Assyrian victories. The slabs show a procession of captives issuing from a gateway, and making their way to the presence of the Great King, who sits gorgeously arrayed, on his throne to receive them. Some of the prisoners are put to death before him by the dagger and sword; others lie on the ground in the agony of being flayed alive. In every direction men are carrying off the spoils of the city; arms, shields, chariots, vases, furniture, and whatever else was of value. Then followed the great deportation of the people to distant parts, and Samaria and Israel were virtually blotted out from among the nations. An Assyrian Resident henceforth stood alongside its kings.¹

That Hezekiah should have remained passive while the Ten Tribes were thus being crushed and extinguished, was no doubt a necessity forced on him by his weakness. To have helped them would have been only a useless self-sacrifice. The very existence of Judah depended, for the moment, on the maintenance of peace with Assyria.

It may have been about this time that Isaiah uttered the striking prediction of the destruction of Tyre, which forms the twenty-third chapter of his Prophecies. Instead of the friendly alliance of the days of David and Solomon, Phenicia had turned bitterly against Judah since the revolution of Jehoiada, by which heathenism had been proscribed and Athaliah murdered—a Tyrian in religion and sympathy, and, by her mother Jezebel, in blood. Its slave marts had been filled with Jews of both sexes, torn from their homes in Judah by Philistine raiders, and its slave dealers had ruthlessly sold them across the sea to distant heathen countries.² The bitterest hatred had thus sprung up against the Tyrians, and found sorrow-

¹ See pp. 161, 196.

² Joel iii. 6.

ful expression in the inspired utterances of Isaiah. The great city had already suffered terribly by the five years siege under Shalmaneser and Sargon, but this was only the first of the successive attacks by which it was ultimately to be overthrown. The events of the near and distant future stood revealed to the prophet, and among them the doom of the proud mistress of the seas.

The people of Jerusalem must, however, have been filled with wonder, when in one of his public addresses,



REMAINS OF TYRE.

the crowd around heard him predict in burning words the fall of the great merchant city,

"Howl, ye Tarshish-ships" cried he, "for Tyre is laid waste! The people of Cyprus will tell you, as you call, homeward bound, at their island, that 'there is no house in Tyre left standing; no home left to welcome you back!'"

"Be dumb for terror, ye of the island,¹ whose streets the merchants of Sidon throng; who have brought over the sea the

¹ Of Tyre. *Ewald.*

corn of Egypt, the harvest of the Nile valley, till you became the mart of nations!

"Blush red for shame, O Sidon; for Tyre, the city of the sea—the sea-fortress—speaks, saying—'In vain have I been in labour and brought forth children—the colonies and cities sprung from me,—in vain have I nourished young men and brought up maidens: I am laid waste!' When the news of the destruction of Tyre reaches Egypt that land will tremble for fear and sorrow!"

"Flee away, ye people of Tyre, to your distant colony, Tarshish;¹ wail aloud, ye inhabitants of the Phenician coast! 'Is this, then, your once joyous city,' men will say, 'whose rise is from the distant past, but whose feet must now bear her off to foreign lands?'"

"Who has devised this against Tyre, the dispenser of crowns, whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the nobles of the earth? Jehovah of Hosts has done so; to bring down the pride of all her glory, and to humble the nobles of the earth.

"Thou, Tarshish, daughter of Tyre, art free now: thy mother-city is no more able to oppress thee! Thou mayest spread thyself over thy territory, free as the Nile over Egypt. There is no longer a hindrance!"²

"Jehovah has stretched out His hand over the sea and shaken the kingdoms with fear, by His command against the great merchant city, that its fortresses be destroyed. He has said also, 'Thou shalt no more rejoice, thou dishonoured virgin-daughter of Sidon.'³ Arise, flee away to Cyprus. But even there thou shalt have no rest."⁴

¹ At Cadiz, in Spain.

² Naegelsbach supposes the words in the text—lit. the "girdle is gone," refer to a toll or dues on passing some barrier; but this seems weak. The treatment of the Tyrian colonies by the mother-city was proverbially harsh, but, now she had fallen, this girdle to their development was gone. Mommsen has a vivid picture of the blind tyranny and narrowness of the policy followed in Carthage, the greatest of Phenician colonies. *Geschichte Roms*, vol. ii. p. 507.

³ Tyre was an offshoot from Sidon. Hitherto it had been virgin in the sense of unconquered.

⁴ The inscription of Sargon states that he crossed the sea of

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xxix.

"Behold the land of the Chaldeans.¹ Its people till of late were unknown. Assyria has now made it a wilderness for savage beasts. The Chaldeans built high their towers; they raised their palaces, but the Assyrian has made the whole land a heap of ruins.²

"Howl, ye Tarshish-ships, for your stronghold is laid waste. And when it is so, it shall come to pass that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, as if lying under the ban of a king whose decree cannot be changed.³ Yet at the end of the seventy years, after the fall of the Chaldean kingdom, it shall be with Tyre as the song of the harlot has it: 'Take the harp, go round the city, thou forgotten harlot. Play skilfully, sing many songs, that thou mayst again be remembered.' For it shall come to pass at the end of seventy years,⁴ that Jehovah will visit Tyre

the setting sun, and in the third year conquered a land which can hardly be any other than Cyprus. *Cheyne*, vol. i. p. 138. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. ii. p. 49.

¹ Merodach Paladan had done homage to Sargon as to "the king of Chaldæa"; the race who gave the region (on the Lower Euphrates) this name having then first come prominently into notice. The Assyrian king had previously devastated the country in successive campaigns. Hence the words that follow are translated by some: "Its people are no more." The rendering given is that of Naegelsbach.

² This allusion to the Chaldeans as the future destroyers of Tyre is striking, for, when the prophet wrote, their land was ruined and their future glory as rulers of Babylon undreamed of. Nabopolassar, the founder of the Chaldean kingdom of Babylon, threw off the Assyrian yoke about B.C. 625, and Nebuchadnezzar, his son and successor, reigned from B.C. 604 to B.C. 560.* But Hezekiah's reign, during which Isaiah's prophecy was uttered, extended from B.C. 724 to B.C. 695, so that there is here a disclosure of events to happen nearly or quite a century after Isaiah's death. And they did happen as he predicted.

³ Esther viii. 8.

⁴ Perhaps a conventional expression for a lengthened period. This usage is not uncommon. See *Speaker's Comm.* on Ezek. xxix. 13. This may well refer to the prostration of the city after

* Schrader, in *Riehm*.

with prosperity once more, so that she shall get her harlot hire again, and begin afresh her uncleanness with all the kingdoms of the earth.¹

"But her gain and her hire shall be holy to Jehovah (for she shall in the end be converted to Him). Nor will it then be heaped up or hoarded (for herself, or for her idols, as hitherto); it will flow forth to satisfy the wants of God's people, who dwell before Jehovah at Jerusalem. To them shall come her gains; that they may have food in plenty and raiment of beauty.²

its capture by Alexander. It must have been long before it recovered from such a disaster.

¹ Perhaps her corrupting influence on heathen nations is intended. It also, however, evidently refers to her trading relations.

² Tyre was founded about 2,750 years before Christ, according to the statements of its priests to Herodotus. It is spoken of in the Book of Joshua as "the strong city."* It seems first to have suffered from the spread of the Assyrian empire, in B.C. 860; payment of tribute by it to King Assur-nazir-pal being then recorded. In 840 we find it buying off Shalmaneser II. by payment of large sums, and again in 742, a century later, ransoming itself in the same way from the armies of Tiglath-pileser II. or Pul. A little later it revolted from that monarch, and had to pay a fine of 150 talents of gold, weighing about three tons, and worth perhaps twenty times as much as at present. Its first siege, so far as we know, was that of Shalmaneser IV. and Sargon. The city on the mainland was destroyed, but that on the island of Tyre held out for five years. This siege ended about 720, and was followed by great prosperity for a hundred and fifty years.† It was next besieged by Nebuchadnezzar for thirteen years, from B.C. 585 to 572, but he seems to have failed in taking it, though it was forced to become tributary to him and to the Persian kings after him. In B.C. 332, the island city was attacked by Alexander, and for the time crushed. Using the ruins of old Tyre on the mainland to build a mole by which his soldiers could reach the island, he took the still virgin fortress in seven months, and sold 30,000 of the inhabitants as slaves. Still it was not destroyed. Regaining its commercial glory after a while, it continued even

* xix. 29.

† See Ezek. xxvii.

A short respite from the presence of the Assyrian armies in Palestine followed the destruction of Samaria; the garrisons and scattered posts only, remaining. In the east, Merodach Baladan, a noble Chaldean patriot, had retaken Babylon in the year 722, and proclaimed himself king, so that Sargon was occupied, in 721, in wresting it once more from him.¹ Hezekiah could thus for the moment breathe freely, and used the calm to promote the restoration of the worship of Jehovah and the purification of the land from idolatry. The time-honoured use of the tops of hills as local sanctuaries had become greatly corrupted, nor was there any longer the same need of it, since the erection of the temple

in the days of St. Jerome, in the fourth century after Christ, to be "one of the noblest, and most beautiful of cities."* Its conversion to Christianity, in the general sense always implied in speaking of great communities, was then already an accomplished fact. St. Paul, indeed, had found a Christian church in it.† In the beginning of the fourth century Methodius was its bishop, and in 315 a great church was built in it by Eusebius of Cæsarea. In 335, a famous Synod was held within its walls. Under the Crusaders it had an archbishop, and was still spoken of as a "most noble city."‡ In 1291, however, it was retaken by the Saracens, and from that time it has sunk into utter decay. Even its ruins have been in great part removed. Last century, when Hasselquist visited it, he found it had only ten inhabitants. The ruins now seen on the peninsula of Tyre are those of the buildings of Crusaders or Saracens. Tyre of the Phenicians, if any of it still remains, lies below the wreck of the city of the Crusaders, and of those of Mahometan and early Christian Tyre. So exactly, after long centuries, has the word of prophecy been fulfilled. *Survey of Western Palestine. Memoirs*, vol. i. pp. 72-77. *Riehm*, art. *Nebucadnezzar*. *Schenkel*, art. *Tyrus*. *Sayce*, in *Smith's Babylonia*, p. 160.

¹ See p. 240.

* *Jer.*, in *Ezek.* xxvii.

† *Acts* xxi. 3, 4.

‡ *Joh. Wirziburgensis*, c. A.D. 1125.

at Jerusalem. Hence, though even Abraham and Jacob, the great forefathers of the race, had built altars on the hills, and though it might be difficult for those at a distance to come up to the capital, Hezekiah determined to remove all the high places,¹ and thus carry out the ancient requirement of the Law, that there should be one great national religious centre.² Other kings had

¹ Lieut. Conder thinks that the cairns found on heights, and even in the Jordan valley, may have been Canaanite high places, though he also speaks of the possibility of their having been raised over graves of distinguished men. In not a few places, moreover, for example on one of the summits of Mount Nebo, he found a cromlech, consisting of two huge stones supporting a third, laid on them, like the top of an altar, and he supposes these may have been "high places." The one on Nebo, indeed, he suggests, may possibly be one of the seven altars built by Balaam for Balak. There are, besides, numerous circles of huge stones more or less perfect—one especially well preserved, at Diban, in Moab, and these he connects in the same way with "high places." The analogy of Mahometan custom certainly gives this idea support. Their sacred places are circles built up for about two feet with stones a foot long. Each circle is provided with a doorway or small cromlech on the west, formed by two stones—generally well hewn and taken from a neighbouring ruin, supporting a third stone or lintel. This serves as an altar on which are laid offerings, consisting of blue beads, fragments of pottery or of purple basalt, bits of china, the locks of guns, etc. The ploughs of the Arabs are left inside the circle with perfect safety. In some cases sacred trees grow close by. These seem to be the counterparts of the ancient "Gilgals," or sacred rings. *Pal. Fund Reports*, 1881, pp. 278-9.

² Deut. xii. 5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; xiv. 23; xvi. 5, 6. Josh. ix. 27. 1 Kings viii. 29. The distinct command to have only one central place of religious worship is first met with in Deuteronomy, and the latest critics placidly affirm that it was invented and foisted into the sacred text during the period of the struggle to put down high places. A copy of the original Deuteronomy they tell us was found in Josiah's reign, and manipulated to suit the views

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attempted it, but had failed: succeeding perhaps in removing those which were merely idolatrous, but feeling it impossible to run counter to the popular prejudices by destroying such as were consecrated to Jehovah.¹ But Hezekiah had the stern zeal of a Puritan. Far and near, through both Judah and Israel, the high places were thrown down, in spite of an opposition so serious that it was used, many years after, by the Assyrian general to stir up popular feeling against the king as a daring and impious innovator, who had provoked the anger of God on the nation by this interference with His worship.² The sun-pillars—apparently obscene emblems³—were, also, everywhere shattered in pieces; and the foul Asherahs cut down. Nor did the reform stop here.

of the age. But what proof is there of this? In the existence of the Tabernacle in the wilderness we have the principle, and it is enforced by the command in Leviticus,* that sacrifices be offered only at the door of the sacred Tent. But Wellhausen gets over this by saying that the Tabernacle is later than the Temple, and was copied from it! *Geschichte Israels*, vol. i. p. 38. Stade is equally adventurous in his explanation. He ascribes Deuteronomy and Leviticus to the time of the exile (*Geschichte des V. Israel*, p. 72), and, like Wellhausen,—in fact, as his echo,—takes for granted that Deuteronomy was worked up to suit the ideas of the last days of Judah and those of Ezra. Mere theories, both, with what seem to me the very flimsiest arguments to support them. But Stade must have the palm of literary boldness, for he laughs at the idea of a residence in Egypt, an Exodus, or a conquest under Joshua, and indeed treats all the historical documents of the Old Testament as a mass of legend with a few grains of truth.

¹ 2 Chron. xiv. 3; xvii. 6, comp. with 1 Kings xv. 14. 2 Chron. xx. 33.

² 2 Kings xviii. 22. 2 Chron. xxxii. 12.

³ Possibly sun-dials, see p. 133. But Phallus worship was a characteristic of the temples of Baal and of Asherah.

* xvii. 4, 5.

Strong minded and intelligent in his faith, Hezekiah was able to realize that even the most venerable relic became a source of evil, worthy of destruction, when abused by inveterate superstition. The brazen serpent, made in the wilderness nearly 800 years before, at the command of Moses, had escaped the perils of many centuries, and stood in the midst of Jerusalem as well-nigh the most sacred of the national treasures. It had, however, become a source of evil. An altar had been built before it on which incense was offered, as if the relic possessed inherent divine power. To Hezekiah it remained, however, only the instrument, worthless in itself, through which Jehovah had once chosen to work; only "a piece of brass." There was too much superstition in the land to leave so specious a pretext for its indulgence, and the brazen serpent, was therefore taken down and broken up. False esthetics had no hold on the vigorous-minded king. As in every age of true religious zeal, they fell into the background before higher considerations.¹

Till Hezekiah's reign the passover seems to have been kept privately in each household or family group over the land, where kept at all.² But the temple was henceforth to be the one centre of public worship. Hitherto the national religion had been mainly local. Not only were many hill tops the sites of shrines; other spots, such as Beersheba and Hebron, were also famous ancient sanctuaries still in use. But to secure a purification of religion, centralization was necessary. He determined, therefore, to hold a great national passover at Jerusalem. The error in reckoning caused by the shortness of the lunar months had, however, made the original time for

¹ See *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. p. 103. *Latterday Pamphlets*, p. 34.

² *Gractz*, vol. ii. p. 228.

the feast, in the first month, no longer exact; the barley harvest, after which it should be held, as a spring feast, falling, now, nearly a month later. The date for the festival was therefore transferred to the second month, and a similar error in the calendar henceforth prevented by the intercalation of an extra month, when necessary, to adjust the lunar to the solar year.¹ Such additional months had long been in use at Nineveh, with which Judea had been closely connected since the reign of Ahaz.

The ruin of the northern kingdom had touched the heart of the people of Judah, and their ancient bitterness of feeling had passed into tender regret. The remnant of the population which had not been swept away to Assyria were now the objects of a loving sympathy that sought to cheer and draw them closer to their brethren in the south. Messengers were therefore sent through the whole land, from Dan to Beersheba, inviting all to come to the passover at Jerusalem, but as a rule their invitation was rejected with contemptuous scorn.² The wreck of the nation had finally lapsed into heathenism and ceased to be Israelites except in blood, nor could even that be claimed after a few years, intermarriages with other races becoming habitual. Some, however, were still found in Manasseh, Asher, and Zebulun, who honoured the God of their fathers, and gladly accepted the summons.

For such a gathering fitting preparations had to be made. Strict in his obedience to the Mosaic law, Hezekiah caused the Holy City to be thoroughly purified. The idolatrous altars raised by Ahaz³ for burnt offerings and for incense, were destroyed, and their material thrown into the Kedron, below the walls. The temple itself had

¹ *Graetz*, vol. ii. p. 228.

² 2 Chron. xxx. 10.

³ 2 Chron. xxviii. 24.

been purified at the beginning of the reign, and repaired where necessary. Enthusiasm spread through the whole community. Priests and Levites who had neglected to complete their ceremonial cleansing were roused to do so, and, when the great day at length arrived, stood in their prescribed places, after the order fixed since the time of David. As in former times, the household fathers, where duly "clean," sacrificed the lambs for their families, but Levites took the place of those who were "unclean." Nor was any ritual inexactness allowed to mar the universal joy. Many worshippers from the northern kingdom, ignorant, perhaps, in the dark times that had passed over their land, of the formal observances demanded, had failed to comply with them. But Hezekiah, ever earnest after the reality, and comparatively indifferent to the merely outward, decreed that they should join in the feast as well as others; not forgetting to pray for them, lest they should suffer, as threatened in Leviticus, for neglect of the commandments of the Law.¹

Then came the great celebration, with such glory of chants and instrumental music, such wealth of gifts for sacrifice, such vast multitudes in attendance, and such general gladness, as recalled the solemnity of the Dedication of the Temple by Solomon.² Seven days, the legal duration, were not long enough for such a jubilee; the feast was prolonged for seven days more.

All that could be done by mere outward means towards a permanent revival of the ancient faith was thus being carried out. For the first time, the tithes were formally secured for the Levites and priests, and registers of birth strictly kept, to secure their legal standing.³ If regularity

¹ Lev. xv. 31. Num. ix. 6. This statement shows that two books of the Pentateuch, at least, were then known.

² 2 Chron. vii. 1-10; xxx. 26.

³ 2 Chron. xxxi.

in public worship; exactness of its observance, and removal of everything idolatrous, could have secured a healthy religious life in the nation, it would have been attained.

Amidst all, moreover, Isaiah and other prophets were zealously proclaiming, from day to day, the highest spiritual truths. Always lofty in their morality, and illustrious in their defence of popular liberty and national independence, they had gradually risen to purer and more far-reaching conceptions of the future. The hope of a great Messiah had been known from early ages, but had become more distinct from the time of David. Yet it only gradually attained its more spiritual and sublime elevation. Joel had prophesied of a terrible day of Jehovah, when judgment executed on the heathen in the Valley of Jehoshaphat would introduce a golden age, and the Spirit would be poured on all flesh. Amos had cheered the faithful of his day by foretelling that the fallen tent of David would again be raised.¹ Hosea had told those of the next generation that the children of Israel would one day return, and seek Jehovah, their God, and David their king; and, like his predecessors, he had painted the happiness of that time. But the development of a higher spiritual tone, under Hezekiah, purified and sublimed these glad anticipations. A bright hopefulness and wide survey of the future, like that which had once characterized the young nation under Moses and Joshua, re-appeared, now, when the State was slowly sinking.

Pious souls in the past had cherished the fond hope of a great kingdom of God to be realized in Israel, and its triumph necessarily implied a fitting and victorious leader and head. The glory of David, and the unbroken succession of his House in Judah, coupled with the sacred

¹ Amos ix. 11.

intimations of prophets, naturally led to the conviction that the expected Messiah could spring only from him. But it was Isaiah whose great soul first realized in their fulness the attributes essential in the Expected One, as the perfect Head of the true Theocracy. Even the best among the kings had come short of them; the hopes of the godly respecting them had been ever deferred. Yet, so much the more did the ideal of the king, needed to introduce the perfected reign of God among men, clear itself from all human mists and colourings in such a mind as that of Isaiah. He felt that the promise had gone forth that God would "stablish the throne of David's kingdom for ever,"¹ and nothing could shake his faith in it. Alike before the despairing and oppressed, or the disbelieving and mocking, he proclaimed his firm trust in this great hope. Nor did he falter even when the hosts of Sennacherib seemed to threaten the immediate ruin of the State, for his confidence never wavered, even when the Assyrian was at the gates of Jerusalem. To him we owe the bodying forth of the Messianic expectations of the past, in a clear and majestic definiteness, which henceforth made his utterances the stay and support of succeeding ages. The Hope of Israel must be one who Himself fulfilled all the demands of God, the Supreme King, so that their power and truth might work through His example and life. A divine might and glory must dwell in Him, to enable Him thus to fulfil an ideal in which all before Him had failed. If He, Himself, did not absolutely realize perfection, it could not be that the perfect kingdom of God could ever be attained. But such an one must come, else the religion which demanded Him was false. If thus completely fulfilling all God's law, however, He must be the Messiah—the glorious King of the true

¹ 2 Sam. vii. 13. 1 Kings xi. 39.

people of Jehovah—expected in all ages of the past. That He should come, was to be the hope, the yearning, the supplication of all. It was blessed even to look trustingly towards His advent, and try to realize personally a glimpse of His perfections!

From Isaiah's day, the Messiah thus first vividly held before the nation, with all the attractions and distinctness of inspired genius, was the absorbing subject of Jewish desire and expectation. That He would assuredly appear in due time it was deemed impious to question; how He would do so, henceforth engrossed the thoughts of the race. That He should spring from the root of David was still proclaimed by the prophets, but His external glory or natural descent were treated as of altogether inferior moment to His spiritual majesty. Such a Messiah could only come as the Prince of Peace; violence would be in contradiction to His nature and aims. The time of His appearance, however, was not as yet revealed even to Isaiah. Still, the glorious ideal was before mankind. From it other prophets caught enthusiasm, and the godly of generation after generation walked in its light.¹

But the bright visions of Isaiah and Micah were far from fulfilment. The moral cancer of heathenism had gained too deep a hold on the nation to be eradicated by the zeal of any prince, however zealous, and the prophetic visions of future Messianic glory had yet to be darkened by denunciations and warnings. The goodness of Judah like that of Ephraim proved to be as the morning cloud or the early dew that goeth away.²

¹ *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 707.

² Hosea vi. 4. The morning cloud is a mass of dense white mist—the moisture brought up from the Mediterranean by the prevalent westerly winds of summer and autumn. It becomes condensed on passing over the colder night air of the land. The

morning clouds are always of a brilliant silvery white, save at such times as they are dyed with the delicate opal tints of dawn. They hang low upon the mountains of Judah, and produce effects of indescribable beauty as they float far down in the valleys, or rise, to wrap themselves round the summits of the hills. In almost every instance, by about seven o'clock the heat has dissipated these fleecy clouds, and to the vivid Eastern imagination the morn has folded her outstretched wings. . . . Billowy masses of silvery white or opaline clouds roll in the valleys in fantastic everchanging forms, from which the summits of the mountains, now stand out like rocky islands in a wide chain of picturesque lakes, and now, seem like the low foot hills of mighty snow-clad ranges, towering behind them to the sky. The scene shifts rapidly as the dense masses of vapour, glistening with all the exquisite brightness of Syrian light, wave hither and thither, or are sucked up by the rising sun, leaving behind them for a few hours a delightful moisture. Neil's *Palestine Explored*, pp. 46, 136. A book abounding with original and striking illustrations of Scripture gained during a long residence in the East.



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CHAPTER XIII.

JUDAH AFTER THE FALL OF SAMARIA.

THE PROPHETS MICAH AND ISAIAH.

WHILE the strenuous exertions required of Hezekiah in restoring the ancient religion, reveal the moral and social corruption of the time, the utterances of the prophets of his reign speak no less forcibly of the deep shadow which accompanied its splendours.

So far as we know, the first of the national prophet-preachers of these later times had been Micaiah or Micah, in the reign of Ahab. After him, men like Joel, Amos and Hosea had risen, the Savonarolas and Bernards of their day; culminating in the great inspired orators of the reign of Hezekiah. His reign was the Augustan age of prophecy in every sense. Not only the transcendent genius of Isaiah, but that of Micah of Moresheth, still show in the inspired writings which bear their names, the wondrous addresses to which their generation listened.

Very little is known of Micah beyond the fact that he came from the neighbourhood of Gath,¹ and was thus a native of the Maritime Plain, with its fiery summer heat;

¹ Micah i. 14. As late as the time of Jerome a hamlet in the neighbourhood of Eleutheropolis was famous as the home of Micah, and a grave there, over which a Christian church had been built, was shown as his. *Liehm.*

its luxuriant vineyards, orchards, and cornfields; its busy towns, and its glimpses of the great sea from every undulation of the landscape. The days of the old prophets had passed away. Elisha had lived as a staid citizen in Samaria; Joel had passed his days quietly in Jerusalem; Isaiah was a member of its higher society. The hairy cloak and leathern girdle of Elijah, his locusts and wild honey, were traditions of the past. But in Micah his austerity and fierce energy seemed to have returned. The strange Oriental fervour of his manner, the corresponding singularity of his dress, and the wild cries and piercing wails with which he accompanied his public utterances, have already been described.¹ His style, sometimes abrupt and obscure, was all his own. Its rich and varied imagery spoke of his birth and life in the lowlands. The dew, the shower upon the grass, the flocks in their folds, the luxuriant vineyards; the single vine and fig tree in the rural homesteads; the towers of the flocks; the sheaves on the threshing-floor; the lion among the sheep; the treading of olives; the gathering of summer fruit, and the gleanings of the vintage supply his metaphors and illustrations.²

Born apparently in the reign of Jotham, or at the close of that of Uzziah, he had seen the apostasy of Ahaz, and the manifold wickedness which had followed, and still abounded under the good Hezekiah. The opening verses of his prophecies, as they now stand, date from before the siege of Samaria, but the successive sections were probably delivered as different addresses, afterwards collected, like those of Jeremiah, and read, perhaps as a whole,³ at stated times, to the people. Such

¹ See p. 333.

² Micah i. 8; ii. 12; iv. 4, 8, 12; v. 8; vi. 15; vii. 1.

³ Jer. xxxvi. 2, 4, 6.

preaching, by one so intensely earnest, must have had overpowering influence in any community, and it is not therefore wonderful to find that the elders of the city at a later time ascribed to it the great revival at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, and even the conversion of the king himself.¹

The traditions of the great earthquake in the reign of Uzziah may have supplied the sublime imagery with which he commences :

"Give ear, all ye peoples!² hearken, O land, and all that is therein!³ The Lord Jehovah appeareth as a witness against you; the Lord from His holy Temple-palace above.⁴

"For, lo, Jehovah comes forth from his place; He descends and sets His feet on the mountain-heights of the land; the mountains melt under Him, the valleys cleave asunder; like wax before the fire, like water rushing down from high places.⁵ All this is for the transgression of Jacob, and for the sins of the House of Israel.⁶ And what is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And whose example spreads sin on the high places of Judah?⁷ Is it not Jerusalem?⁸

"Therefore will I make Samaria a ruin-heap of the field; I will turn it into vineyard plantations; I will roll down its stones into the valley beneath, and make bare its foundations. All is carved

¹ Jer. xxvi. 17-19. See Pusey's *Minor Prophets*, p. 29.

² Micah i. 2.

³ Lit. "and its fulness."

⁴ Not the temple of Jerusalem. See ver. 3.

⁵ The autumn rains form great torrents which sweep down as floods from the hills.

⁶ Jacob and Israel—the nation as a whole.

⁷ *Eichhorn*. If he be right, these words must have been spoken before Hezekiah destroyed the high places. *Knobel* and *Diestel* agree with him.

⁸ The apostasy of the land had always spread from the capital. *Jeroboam I.* made Israel to sin. *Ahab* of Samaria introduced *Baal* worship; *Jehu* of Samaria restored the worship of the calves; *Solomon* built high places to false gods on *Olivet*; and *Ahaz* had gone still further.

images of stone will be shattered in pieces; all the gifts presented to the idol temples, from the money gained by lewdness, will be burned with fire,¹ and the site of its idol statues will I make desolate. For by the pay of harlots they came, and they shall be carried off² to grace the harlot temples of Assyria.

"At the thought of this I beat my breast, and wail and howl; I go stripped and barefoot;³ I wail like the jackals and rear like the ostriches! For her wounds are mortal; they reach even to Judah; to the gate of my own people, to Jerusalem! Tell it not in Gath! weep not in Acre.⁴ In Beth-haphra⁵ roll yourselves for sorrow in the dust. Go forth, ye people of Saphir,⁶ naked even to shame; ye inhabitants of Zaanan,⁷ go not out of your town to mourn at Beth-ezel, for its own grief denies you a shelter. The inhabitant of Maroth⁸ trembles for his goods, for evil has come down from Jehovah to the gate of Jerusalem! Bind the chariot to the swift horse, ye people of Lachish, to flee from the enemy! Ye were the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion; for in you, first, were found the transgressions of Israel!⁹

"Therefore wilt thou, O Judah, be forced to give up Moresheth of Gath as a treaty-gift to the foe.¹⁰ The houses of Achzib¹¹ will prove a lie to the kings of Judah;¹² they will pass away from

¹ Knobel thinks the gifts were not those made to idols, but the wealth of the city.

² They were probably those of silver and gold. Hos. xiii. 2. See Dan. i. 2. 2 Sam. viii. 11. Jos., *Ant.*, X. xi. 1.

³ *Sept.* 2 Sam. xv. 30; Isa. xx. 2.

⁴ *De Wette. Ewald, Kleinert. Knobel.* Acre—the weeping places.

⁵ The dusty place.

⁶ The lovely town.

⁷ Going forth.

⁸ Bitterness.

⁹ Diestel supposes this refers to the sun horses and sun chariots introduced to Jerusalem from Lachish, whither they had come from the northern kingdom. 2 Kings xxiii. 11. But it may refer to idolatry generally.

¹⁰ *Kleinert.*

¹¹ Achzib = winter torrent or "deceitful." A Nachal Achzib is a deceitful brook: that is, one that dries up in summer and disappoints the thirsty traveller.

¹² A place so far south that the Edomites repeatedly took it. Jos., *Ant.*, XIII. ix. 1.

them like the dried up brooks of summer. A conqueror will I bring to thee, O inhabitant of Maresheh;¹ the great men of Israel shall flee even as far as Adullam² to hide in its caves! Cut off thy locks, O daughter of Zion, make thy head bare in sorrow for the sons of thy joy; make broad thy baldness like that of the vulture;³ for they are gone forth into captivity from thee!"

Having proclaimed the judgments impending on Judah, the prophet, in the second chapter, denounces the prevailing wickedness, and predicts a fate like that of Samaria. He also exposes the deceptive promises of the false prophets.

"Woe to them⁴ that plot iniquity, and contrive evil on their beds, to carry it out with the first morning light, because they can do so! They covet fields and take them by violence; houses, and seize them; they oppress the poor man and his house; the prosperous man and his inheritance.

"Therefore thus says Jehovah: 'Behold, I purpose evil against this race; evil from which you shall not remove your necks. Ye shall not then walk any longer haughtily, for it shall be a time of evil!'

"In that day shall they raise a song of derision against you, and wail a lament for you, saying 'All is over with us;' 'we are utterly spoiled; the mighty God⁵ has taken back the inheritance of my people. How has He torn mine from me! He has given our fields to the foe!' Thus no one will henceforth

¹ Maresheh = "conquered village." The play on the names throughout is very characteristic of Hebrew oratory and poetry.

² Maresheh and Adullam (labyrinth) would be filled with the fugitive Hebrews, fleeing before the Assyrians. In 1 Chron. iv. 39-41, it is said that various heads of clans among the Simeonites fled into the south of Judah in the reign of Hezekiah.

³ Shaving the head was the sign of mourning. Job i. 20. Jer. vii. 29. In Deut. xiv. 1 it was forbidden to shave the forehead. The Eastern vulture is bald, not the eagle, as in the English version.

⁴ Micah ii. 1.

⁵ They hardly dare name Him. Amos vi. 19.

stretch the measuring cord for thee, O man of Judah, to set apart for thee a portion in the congregation of Jehovah!¹

"'Stop your prophesying,'² cry they; 'you shall no longer prophesy respecting such things,'³ nor shall we hear such evil speaking.'⁴ What a thing to say, O House of Jacob? Does Jehovah act thus from impatience or revenge? Will your calamity be of His doing and not rather from your sins?⁵ 'Are not my words friendly,' says He, 'to him that walks uprightly?'⁶ But now have My people run as foes against Me. Ye strip the mantle⁷ from the fugitive who has escaped from the Assyrians, and is making his way to the south, having left war behind. The very women of My people, who have fled hither from the enemy, and seek shelter for a time, ye have driven forth from the peaceful homes they had formed. Ye have forced them to go to other peoples for safety, and have thus cut them off for ever from My glory.⁸ Up! and begone, for this land will no longer be your rest; it is foul with your offences; it is plague-stricken, and shall be utterly waste.'

"If a false and designing man say 'I will prophesy to you of wine and strong drink,' this people take him for their prophet. 'I, Jehovah,' says he, 'will gather thee all, O Jacob, I will

¹ They would have no measured lot of ground in the land, as they had had heretofore.

² The word used is from the verb "to drop," as the dew or rain, and refers to the words dropping from the lips. Kleinert makes it mean "foam not at the mouth,"—"foam they."

³ The affairs of the great.

⁴ A paraphrase.

⁵ Eichhorn translates thus: "'Prophecy not,' say they; 'let these prophesy' (alluding to false prophets). And then the prophet answers 'If they do not prophesy, your shame and punishment will not be removed.'"

⁶ *Hitzig*. Emendation. The following lines are a paraphrase.

⁷ Two kinds of upper clothing are mentioned, the Salmah—the Haik or the Abba of modern Arabs, a large square blanket or sheet—and the Eder, a special kind of mantle, of sheepskin among the poor. *Leyrer*, in *Herzog*, vol. vii. p. 27.

⁸ Among the heathen they were far from the temple and the knowledge of Jehovah.

⁹ Ibn Ezra, Hitzig, Struensee, J. D. Michaelis, Tholuck, Kleinert,

surely bring together again the remnant of Israel; I will bring all into one, like sheep into their fold; like a flock in its pasture; till both fold and wide pasture teem with men. And He that is mighty¹ will go before them, and will force their way through every obstacle, and they will flood through the gate of their house of bondage, and stream forth through it. Their King will go before them; even Jehovah at their head."²

Such were the delusions set before the people by the false prophets, but Jehovah, through His true servants, spoke in a very different strain.

"So these men talk, but thus do I, Jehovah, speak to you: 'Give ear, O ye heads of Jacob;' ye princes of the House of Israel!⁴ Is it not your part to keep to what is right? But ye hate what is good and love what is evil. Ye take the very skin off My people, and the flesh from their bones; ye eat the flesh of My people and flay off their skin; ye hew their bones and cut them in pieces as for the pot, and as flesh for the cauldron!' In the day of wrath you shall cry to Jehovah, but He will not hear you; He will hide His face from you in that time, because your deeds are evil!

"Thus saith Jehovah concerning the false prophets that lead astray My people; who, as long as they have food in their teeth, cry 'Peace,' and foretell prosperity, but declare him who does not put meat in their mouths an enemy of God. For this, a night shall come over you in which ye shall have no vision; darkness in which ye shall not divine; the sun shall go down over these prophets, and the day over them shall be dark!⁵ Then shall the seers blush red; the diviners be covered with shame; they shall

Ewald and others agree that what follows is the utterance of the false prophet.

¹ The expected Messiah.

² Their ancient limits will be too small for the re-united twelve tribes.

³ Micah iii.

⁴ These names must apply to Judah after Samaria had fallen.

⁵ Their false predictions will be disappointed by the political night that will fall on the nation, and by the rebuke given them thus from above.

all cover the lip, because no answer to their predictions comes from God!

"But I am filled with power by the Spirit of Jehovah; filled with uprightness and manly boldness, to tell Jacob his transgression and Israel his sin!"¹

"O hear this, ye heads of the House of Jacob, ye princes of the House of Israel, who have a hatred of the right, and have crooked everything just; who think to build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem by unrighteousness. You chiefs give judgment for reward; you priests, who should freely teach the law, pervert it for hire;² you who style yourselves prophets divine for money. And yet you appeal to Jehovah and say, 'Is not Jehovah among us; no evil can touch us!'

"Therefore, on your account, Zion shall be ploughed as a field, Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins, and the temple hill be turned to a wooded height!"³

Such a prophecy respecting the temple, already the object of superstitious veneration, was fitted to rouse the fiercest passions of the hearers, as far gentler words, in later times, kindled the popular fury against our Lord

¹ How clearly this reveals the bitter opposition he had to bear.

² Lit. "prophecy" or "teach," but, it is implied, unfaithfully.

³ The word used is Ya'ar, the modern "Wa'ar" of the fellahin dialect, by which they indicate the pathless, rocky, unenclosed, barren wilds of brushwood which cover many of the Palestine hills. Thus in Eccles. ii. 6, where Solomon is introduced saying that "he made him pools of water, to water therewith the wood," etc.—it should be—"the rough mountain forest," etc. In fact he had cascades, or pools, falling from ledge to ledge, to water forest trees, etc., planted by him in picturesque heights.* It was in a Ya'ar that Jonathan found the honey; dripping apparently from a cleft in the rocks; the favourite resort of wild bees.† Here, the hill of Zion is to become a Ya'ar, and the neglected thickets on its sides even now attest the truth of the prophecy. See Neil, pp. 205-7.

* Eccles. ii. 6.

† Sam. xiv. 27.

and St. Stephen. Micah, therefore, forthwith soothes the mind of his audience by telling them :

" Yet,¹ in days to come,² the mountain of the House of Jehovah shall be established as the highest³ of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills, and the nations shall flow to it. The heathen multitudes shall set out to it, saying to each other, ' Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah; to the House of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.' For the Lord God shall go forth from Zion; the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And God will judge between many nations; He will give decisions between strong peoples afar off. Then will they beat their swords into ploughshares; and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Every one will then sit under His vine and under His fig-tree, and none shall make him afraid; the mouth of Jehovah of Hosts has spoken it."⁴

Kindled by the thought of this glorious future, the prophet now builds on it his sure hope that God will one day bring back the captives of His race to their own land, and restore their glory. Under their king, the great Messiah, they shall triumph over all their foes. Doubtless they fancied a political and worldly splendour, but the Anointed of God was to be a spiritual king, and His dominion that of the true theocracy. Meanwhile the people, touched by the glorious picture the prophet has drawn, enthusiastically welcome the prospect.

¹ Micah iv.

² Lit. "at the end of days."

³ *Hitzig*. Not on the top of other mountains. It shall be reckoned the most glorious of all mountains.

⁴ Ewald makes the words ending here, a quotation, beginning with "Come let us." This picture of peace in the happy future of the world passed, through the Jewish Sybilline verses, and possibly from the writings of the prophets themselves, to the Roman poets. *Virg., Georg.*, i. 507. *Ovid., Fasti*, i. 699. *Martial*, xiv. 34.



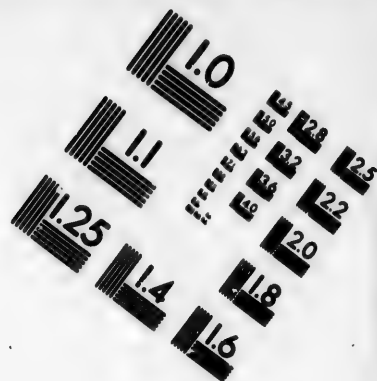
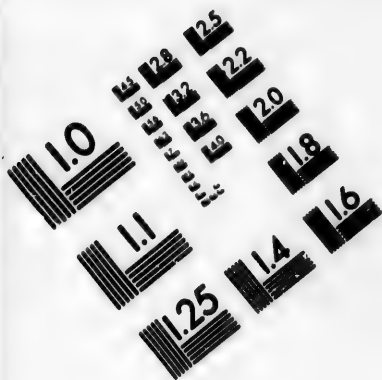
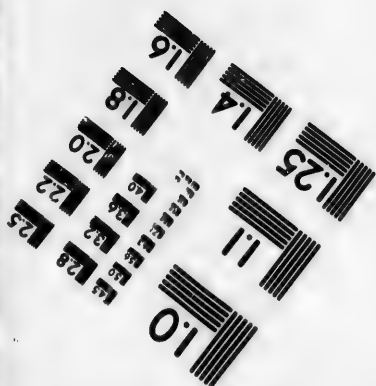
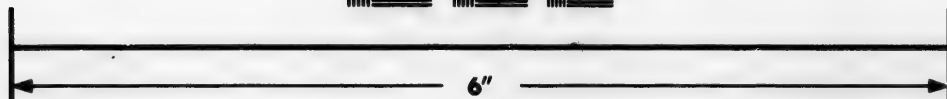
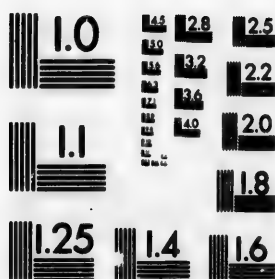


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"'Let other nations,' say they, 'walk every one in the name of their god; we shall walk in the name of Jehovah, our God, for ever and ever.'"

The prophet then resumes:—

"In that day, says Jehovah, I will gather the lame, and assemble the far scattered; the race that I have afflicted; and I will make the lame into a remnant; those driven out into a strong nation; and Jehovah will reign over them in Mount Zion, from henceforth, for ever.

"And thou, O Ophel,¹ the tower of the flocks, the hill of the daughter of Zion; to thee shall thy former dominion return; the kingdom shall come back to the daughter of Jerusalem!

"But now, wherefore dost thou raise a great cry? Is there no longer a king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? Is this why trembling has seized thee, like a woman in travail?

"Tremble, indeed, and be in pain, like a woman in travail, O daughter of Zion. For, truly thou must now go forth from thy city, and dwell in the field, and come even to Babylon.² But there thou shalt be delivered; there will Jehovah deliver thee from the hand of thine enemies!³

"Even now many heathen peoples have gathered themselves against thee,⁴ and say, 'We shall defile Zion by the blood we shall shed in her; our eyes shall have their desire on her.'

"But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah; they do not understand His counsel—that He has gathered them to be themselves trodden under foot, like sheaves on the threshing floor!

"Up, and thresh them, O daughter of Zion'—says Jehovah—'for I will make thy horn iron; thy hoofs brass; thou shalt

¹ *Kleinert.* Ophel was the hill to the south of Zion, and part of the Holy City. The flocks of the citizens may have been driven to it for shelter from a foe; or the citizens themselves might be regarded as a flock guarded by this watch-tower.

² At this time the kingdom of Babylon was yet in the distant future. Assyria was still in its glory, with Babylon as its dependency.

³ How wonderful this prophecy.

⁴ The Assyrians, under whose standards many nations served.

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crush to pieces many peoples,¹ and offer up their spoil to Jehovah; their treasures to the Lord of the whole earth! Gather now in troops,² thou daughter of many sons!³ They will presently lay siege against us; they will, as it were, smite the ruler of Israel on the cheek with a staff."⁴

Yet, God has not forgotten His people. A great deliverer—the Messiah King—will appear to raise up again the theocracy. Till now the prophets had predicted only his descent from David. Micah goes further and names the very place from which He is to come.

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah; small though thou be among the thousands⁵ of Judah, out of thee shall come forth for Me a Ruler over Israel, whose going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity."⁶

"But He will deliver them up to their adversity till she that beareth has brought forth—till Bethlehem has seen this Messiah Prince born. Then shall the remnant of His brethren, still in exile, return to those of the children of Israel who remain

¹ The figure is from the oxen treading the threshing floor. Their feet break the straw into fine fragments, in which condition it becomes the special fodder of all domestic beasts in Palestine. It is called Teben.

² Micah. v. 1.

³ Paraphrase. A difficult expression.

⁴ The Assyrians were about to attack Jerusalem. Sargon says he "subdued the land of Judah." This must have been in 711 or 710. Layard's *Inscriptions*, pl. xxxiii. 8.

⁵ The districts comprising 1,000 of a population. A counterpart of our hundreds. Ewald, Noyes, and Eichhorn translate the words "too small be reckoned amongst the," etc.

⁶ *Vulgate*. So *Luther*. *Ewald*, "whose origin is from of old, from the most ancient days." *De Wette*, "from of old—from the days of the foretime." *Noyes*, "from the ancient age, from the days of old." *Kleinert*, "from the remote past, from the days of the foretime." *Sept.* like the *Vulgate*. The words translated in our Version "from everlasting," are translated in vii. 14, "from of old."

in the Holy Land. He shall stand and rule¹ in the might of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah, His God. Then shall they dwell in security,² for He shall be great even to the ends of the earth. And He shall give peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land; when he treads in our palaces, then shall He raise against him seven shepherds and eight leaders of the people.³ And they shall devour Assyria with the sword; the land of Nimrod in its gates. Thus shall He deliver from the Assyrian when he comes into our land, and treads within our borders.

"Then will the remnant of Jacob be in the midst of many nations like the fertilizing night-mist⁴ from Jehovah; as the showers upon the grass, which thenceforth grows without waiting for the will of man or tarrying for the sons of men. The residue of Jacob will be among the heathen, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the wood;⁵ as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, when he passes, treads down and tears, no one being able to deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted high above thy oppressors, and all thy enemies shall be destroyed."

In this day of triumph Israel will once more be purged from every defilement. They have trusted in horses and

¹ "Be a shepherd."

² *De Wette. Eichhorn.*

³ An endless number of great leaders will stand at the side of the Messiah Prince to help him.

⁴ Neil strikingly points out that dew, in the strict sense of the word, falls in Palestine only in winter, when it is of little use, as it then rains in tropical torrents. In summer and autumn, when dew is much needed, there is none. The cloudless skies leave no moisture in the air to descend in this form when the earth is cooled at night. In these months, however, a heavy mist is brought each night over the land by the prevailing west winds—the moisture from the Mediterranean—and is condensed into fine rain, which wonderfully revives the parched herbage. It comes about twelve o'clock. To this, so unspeakably grateful in a hot country, Scripture always refers when it uses the word translated in our version "dew." The equivalent in Arabic means "the small rain." See *Neil*, p. 138.

⁵ *Ya'ar.* See p. 358.

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chariots; in strong cities; in heathen superstitions; in idols; in obscene Asherahs,—but all these will be removed. The people must trust in God alone.

"It shall come to pass in that day,¹ saith Jehovah, that I will take away thy horses from the midst of thee, and destroy thy chariots; I will destroy the fortified cities of thy land, and throw down all thy fortresses;² I will root out the black arts from thy hand, and thou shalt no longer have heathen diviners of the clouds. I will cut off thy graven images and thy idol statues from thy midst, and thou shalt no longer bow down to the work of thy hands. I will pluck up thy Asherahs³ from the midst of thee, and overthrow thy vainly trusted defence."⁴

Nor will disobedience be suffered any longer :

"I will execute vengeance in anger and in fury on the peoples that have not hearkened to My voice."

The sixth chapter appears to have been a distinct address, taking the sublime form of a controversy of Jehovah with His people. The book could not open and close with threatenings. True to his office, the prophet hastens to give a clear statement of the means by which all hindrances to the enjoyment of present good, and the fear of future visitations, might be at once removed.

¹ Micah v. 10.

² This paragraph recalls the ancient ideal of Israel as trusting absolutely in Jehovah and rejecting all human aids. Or it pictures the Messianic kingdom as one of permanent peace, in which the defences and inventions of war will no longer be needed.

³ The clinging fondness for the worship of nature and its powers under the symbol of a tree is striking. A green tree in the neighbourhood of Meccah still receives divine honours. Other Arabs venerate a particular date palm as the shrine of an indwelling goddess. In Mukan an ancient elm was worshipped. The Persians in many places do homage to great old trees as abodes of saints, and call them Sheiks or Imâm. See note in *Hitzig*.

⁴ Eichhorn translates, "and destroy thy sacred groves."

"Hear,¹ ye now what Jehovah says. 'Rouse thyself; carry thy dispute before the mountains; let the hills hear thy voice!'"

"Hear, O ye mountains, the controversy of Jehovah; Hear, ye rocks, the eternal foundations of the earth! For Jehovah has a controversy with His people; He will plead His case with Israel!

"O my people, what evil have I done to you? Wherein have I been grievous to you? Testify against me! I brought thee up from the land of Egypt; I redeemed thee from the land of slavery, and sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam to go before thee. My people, remember what Balak, the king of Moab, devised,² and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him.³ Remember what happened on the way from Shittim to Gilgal,⁴ that ye may know the righteousness of Jehovah! 'Wherewith,' asked Balak, 'shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Has Jehovah pleasure in thousands of rams, or in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn as a sin-offering for my offences; the fruit of my body as an atonement for my soul?' But Balaam answered, setting light by the merely outward, 'He hath shown thee, O man, what is good. What does Jehovah ask of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God!'"

Having thus reminded them of the true requirements of Jehovah, the prophet once more denounces the wickedness of Jerusalem and threatens it with Divine wrath.

"The voice of Jehovah calls to the city, and the wise hear

¹ Micah vi. 1.

² Jehovah condescends to plead His cause against Israel; calling the mountains and hills of the land to witness between them; and leaving the people themselves to the verdict of their own hearts. See Josh. xxiv. 27.

³ Heb. yāāts. In A. V. "counselled," "consulted," "purposed," "devised."

⁴ Such allusions to the Book of Numbers prove conclusively that it must have been known long before Micah's day. See Numbers, chapters xxii. to xxv.

⁵ Thus completed by De Wette.

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Thee, O Lord, with awe.¹ Give ear to the threatening and to Him who has appointed it! Are there not yet in the houses of the wicked, unrighteous treasures, and the hateful false² measure? Is he pure who has false balances, and a girdle purse³ of deceitful weights?⁴ Is she pure whose rich men are full of violence, whose inhabitants speak lies, whose tongue in their mouth is deceitful?

"Therefore I will smite thee sorely, and make thee desolate, on account of thy sins. Thou shalt eat and not be satisfied; thine hunger shall still be within thee; thou shalt hide thy precious things but thou shalt not save them from the enemy, and what thou thinkest thou hast saved will I give to the sword. Thou shalt sow but shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives but not anoint thee with oil; and the grapes, yet not drink the wine! For you keep the statutes of Omri;⁵ you follow all the works of the House of Ahab, and walk in their counsels. Therefore I will make thee, Jerusalem, a desolation,⁶ and thy inhabitants a derision, and thou shalt bear the reproach of the nations.⁷

Grief at the fallen glory of his people—full of guilt and moral decay—overpowers the prophet, and he breaks into a lament over the small number of righteous men left.

"Woe is me!⁸ It is with me as at the gleanings of summer fruit; and at the gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster left to cut; no early fig which my soul desireth.⁹ The good man has perished from the land; there are no longer any

¹ *Eichhorn*. Noyes says, "And the man of wisdom will discern thee." Ewald, "And verily it is salvation to fear Thy name." Hitzig, "Wisdom fears thy name."

² Oversmall ephah.

³ Light weights were generally carried in a purse in the girdle. Prov. vii. 20; xvi. 11. Isa. xlii. 6. The word is lit. "girdle."

⁴ Lit. "stones." See also Lev. xix. 36. Deut. xxv. 13. 2 Sam. xiv. 26. Prov. xi. 1. Zech. v. 8.

⁵ See p. 45.

⁶ Lit. "astonishment."

⁷ *Sept.*

⁸ Micah. vii. 1.

⁹ No good man left, such as my soul yearns to find.

upright left among men! All lie in wait to shed blood; every one weaves plots against his brother. Both their hands are eagerly given to do evil; the prince is bought; the judge gives decisions for a bribe; the great man tells him what his soul desires, and, together, they extort it from the falsely accused.¹ The best of them is like a brier; the most upright like a hedge of thorns, to the honest and poor.

"But, O Lord, the day Thy seers have predicted; the day of Thy visitation cometh; then shall their confusion follow!

"Depend not on a friend; put no confidence in a trusted one; keep thy lips, the doors of thy mouth, from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son will betray the father; the daughter stand up against her mother; the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's foes will be his own household."²

But the prophet will not leave his people to despair. He sees Judah and Jerusalem hereafter penitent, and puts words of faith and returning love to God in their lips.

"As for me," says he, in the name of Jerusalem and Judah, "I will look to Jehovah; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me! Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; though I have fallen I will arise: though I now sit in darkness, Jehovah will be my light! I will bear the wrath of Jehovah, for I have sinned against Him, till He plead my cause, and give judgment for me again; till He bring me forth to the light, and I behold His righteousness. Then, she³ that is my enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her who said to me, 'Where is Jehovah, thy God? My eyes shall feed on her;'⁴ she will be trodden down like the mire of the street."

"A day comes when thy walls, O Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; a day when the decree for thy restoration shall be widely spread!"

¹ *Sept.* The great man asks, and the judge speaks soft words to him, and he has what he desires.

² His slaves and dependents. See Matt. x. 21, 35, 36. Luke xii. 53; xxi. 16.

³ The heathen, now so haughty and triumphant.

⁴ Jerusalem.

⁵ Text doubtful.

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In that day men shall come to thee from Assyria, and from the cities of Egypt to the river Euphrates, even from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.¹ But the land when they reach it will be desolate, because of the sins of its inhabitants, and as the fruit of their doings.

In that day they shall cry to God :—

“Feed Thy people with Thy shepherd’s staff; the flock of Thine inheritance. Give them to dwell apart in the glades of Carmel; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead,² as in the days of old.”

In answer to this supplication God gives a gracious promise.

“As in the days when thou camest forth from Egypt will I show you marvellous things.

“The heathen shall see it and be afraid of all your might.” They shall lay their hand on their mouth; their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like the serpent; they shall creep out of their hiding places, as the crawling serpents creep, terrified, from their holes; they shall tremble before Jehovah our God, and shall fear before Thee!”

The prophet now closes in a burst of adoration :—

“Who is a God like Thee; pardoning iniquity and graciously passing by the transgressions of the remnant of Thy heritage! He retains not His anger for ever, because He delights in mercy! He will once more have compassion upon us; He will tread down our misdoings; He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt show the faithfulness to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham,—which Thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old.”

Such were some of the magnificent discourses to which the crowds in Jerusalem listened seven hundred years

¹ From the east and the west; the north and the south.

² Now lost, but then regained.

³ That of restored Israel. Lit. “their.”

before Christ, when the humble huts and cottages, which afterwards became Rome, were still the homes of their first tenants.¹ But Micah was not alone in his outbursts of pathetic or splendid oratory. Audiences in the temple precincts or in the open spaces of the city heard Isaiah also, lifting up his voice as a preacher of righteousness. The twenty-eighth chapter of his prophecies was apparently delivered in the early years of Hezekiah, and vividly brings before us the man and his times. The Egyptian faction² had already sought to break the existing relations with Assyria, and to make a treaty with Pharaoh, but the prophet denounces the folly and peril of their proposal.

Like Micah, he commences by a terrible denunciation of Samaria, which was approaching its fall. The first verses have already been given.³ But the true prophet is a messenger of wrath only that he may introduce promises of mercy, if the lessons be taken to heart. Ephraim, the kingdom of the Ten Tribes must, indeed perish, but—

“In that day,⁴ after Samaria has fallen, Jehovah of Hosts will be a glorious crown and a fair diadem to the remnant of His people;⁵ instead of the withered crown of the glory of Samaria. He will inspire him that sitteth as judge with a spirit of uprightness, and him that turneth back the battle to the gate⁶ with heroic strength.

But Judah as well as Ephraim was in danger by its sins. Widespread drunkenness—a phrase perhaps, including, also, general pride and lawlessness—had destroyed Samaria. It would, also, ruin Judah. For—

¹ Year of foundation of Rome, B.C. 753. ² In Jerusalem.

³ See p. 247.

⁴ Isa. xxviii. 5 ff.

⁵ The reign of Hezekiah showed God, thus, the glorious Head of His people in Judah.

⁶ In the future wars with Philistia and Assyria.

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"Even the men of Jerusalem stagger through wine, and reel through strong drink. Priest and false prophet stagger through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine; they reel through strong drink; they stagger as they announce their visions; they reel as they give forth their oracles and judgments. All their tables are covered with drunken vomit; there is not a clean spot on them left."

But such reproaches were bitterly resented:—

"'Whom,' say they, 'will he thus teach knowledge, and whom would he make to understand his (so-called) revelations? Are we babes just weaned from the milk, and taken from the breasts? For he gives us command on command; command on command; rule upon rule, rule upon rule; a word here, a word there.'"¹

Isaiah, however, has his answer ready:—

"Yes, it shall be as you say: the same thing over and over; Jehovah will still speak to this people as heretofore; but as they mock me with stammering lips, it shall be through the stammering lips and strange tongue of the Assyrians² that He will punish them; not as till now, in gentleness and love. He has told them through His own prophets their wise course; the true rest to the weary land and its true refreshment; but they would not hear.³ Henceforth, therefore, the word of Jehovah to them will indeed be, as ye say, 'Command on command, command on command; rule upon rule, rule upon rule; a word here, and a word

¹ Eichhorn translates this passage spiritedly: "Whom can such men teach wisdom; to whom can they give instruction? Men who talk like children just weaned, like children just taken from the breast—Zav Lazav, Zav Lazav, Kav Lakav, Kav Lakav—here and there, half broken words." That is, they could only speak with the broken imperfectness of drunken men. The untranslated words are those of the Hebrew text.

² The Assyrian language was "stammering" and barbarous to the Jews. Though closely allied to the Hebrew, it sounded, in comparison, as Low German would to a High German, or Midland English to a Southern Englishman.

³ The prophets had counselled peace with Assyria; the avoidance of relations with Egypt, and above all, faithful obedience to Jehovah.

there'; but it will be no longer to save this people, but to bring on them their merited punishment; that as they go on their own way they may fall backwards and be broken, and snared and taken captive.

"Therefore, hear ye the Word of Jehovah, ye scoffers, who rule this people of Jerusalem! Because ye say in your hearts, 'We have no fear; we have made a covenant with Death, and an agreement with the kingdom of the grave' by magic arts and oracles; they will not touch us; the overflowing scourge of war, when it floods the land, shall not reach us, for we have, with lying and deceit, made a secret treaty with Egypt¹ for protection. This lying will be our refuge; under falsehood will we hide.' Therefore thus saith the Lord, Jehovah, 'Behold I am He who has laid a foundation stone² in Zion; a tried stone; a precious, deep-laid, corner stone;³ He who believeth shall not think of fleeing away.⁴ But, as a builder uses the line and the plummet, so I shall use justice for a line and righteousness for a plummet

¹ Sheol.

² Isaiah xxviii. 15.

³ The enormous size and cost of the foundation stones of Eastern buildings is to be remembered. Thus 1 Kings v. 17, "Great stones, costly stones, hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the house."

⁴ "The true seed of David, manifest in Jesus Christ." *Delitzsch*. Cheyne thinks it refers to Jehovah. Hitzig says, "The prophet means that the fabric of the Jewish State will not be held up by the human means of defence on which some trusted, but by the sacred city (as the habitation of Jehovah). The Syrians and Israelites had failed to overthrow it (vii. 1) and so, also, would the Assyrians." But the interpretation of *Delitzsch* seems best. The sure corner stone of the Jewish State, to keep it from sinking, was undoubtedly Jehovah, but that of the spiritual theocracy—the Church or Messianic kingdom, is Jehovah, in Christ Jesus.

⁵ Those who trust in Jehovah will feel that Jerusalem, under His protection, is as secure as is the temple, resting on its immoveable foundation stone. This is the primary allusion; the higher is that the Church, resting on the Messiah Prince, is as immoveable as the temple was of old. The stone is laid in Zion as a sign that the Messiah will be of the stock of David, to whom Zion was, as it were, sacred.

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in dealing with the men of Jerusalem, and the hail of my judgment shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the torrents of My wrath shall flood out the hiding place of the scoffers, and your league with Death will be annulled, and your agreement with the Grave shall not stand; your black arts, and spells, and conjurations will be of as little good to you as they were to the men of Samaria. When the overflowing scourge of the Assyrian armies shall pass through the land, ye shall be trodden down by it. As soon as its flood comes it will take you with it. Day after day it will pass through, from morning to night; the Word of Jehovah at which ye now mock, will then, when uttered in deeds, be an unmingled terror!

"For the bed you have made for yourselves is too short for one to stretch himself on it, and the covering too narrow to wrap one's self in it. For Jehovah will rise up as He once did at Mount Perazim.¹ He will rouse Himself as at the valley of Gibeon,¹ to do His work—a work new and strange to Him, the God of mercy—and to carry out His task—a task unheard of before.²

"Now, therefore, be no longer scoffers at my words—thinking to seek help from Egypt and to betray Assyria—lest the bondage in which you now stand, as tributary to the Great King, be made still harder; for there has been revealed to me from Jehovah of Hosts a degree of destruction, not to be recalled, on the whole land.

"Give ear, and hear my voice; attend, and hear my speech; Take a lesson from the tiller of the land as to the moral government of God. Is the ploughman always ploughing in order to sow? Is he always opening and breaking the clods of the field? When he has levelled the soil does he not scatter the fennel flower³ and

¹ Josh. x. 10, 12. 2 Sam. v. 20, 25. 1 Chron. xiv. 16. See vol. iii. p. 209.

² It might be natural to visit the heathen with judgment, but to chastise His own people thus!

³ The word Ketzakh, translated fitches, or vetches, is perhaps, the fennel flower. It is an annual, about a foot high, with bluish flowers. Its capsules contain numerous black seeds which are sold in the bazars of Palestine and Egypt, chiefly to season bread, either before, or after it is baked. To use a threshing sledge for such a frail plant would have been monstrous. See W. Carruthers, F.R.S., in *Bible Educator*, vol. i. p. 36. Instead of fennel

cast abroad the cummin,¹ and sow the wheat in the best spots;² the barley in its appointed places, and spelt³ along the edges of the field? Thus his God rightly instructs him, and gives him knowledge. In like manner must not Jehovah work in due time, order, and mode? Human affairs are guided by Him according to rules as fixed, and with unerring wisdom and power. Let the careless and the mockers fear His judgments, which, also, have their place in His Providence, and are coming on apace!"

"Yet in these very judgments God acts differently with different classes, as the farmer does in the threshing of his crops. For the fennel flower is not threshed with a threshing sledge;⁴ the heavy threshing wheel is not rolled over the cummin; but the fennel flower is beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a flail. Is the precious bread corn trampled to nought on the threshing floor? Nay; the farmer does not keep on threshing it, or drive his threshing wheel, and his horses, over it, for ever. To do so would be to destroy that which he values most. This lesson also comes from Jehovah of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom."

flower, Mr. Neil says, "Ketzakh is a kind of rape seed, grown for oil, still known by this name in Palestine, and still beaten out in the same way." *Neil*, p. 231.

¹ Cummin is a plant somewhat like fennel. Anise, carraway, and coriander belong to the same family. Cummin was, as the text shows, cultivated in ploughed fields by the ancient Jews. Its seeds have a bitterish warm taste, with an aromatic flavour. It was used as a condiment. *Dict. of the Bible*. ² Ewald.

³ Not rye, which is a northern variety of grain unknown in Palestine.

⁴ Threshing is performed in the East, in the open air. Oxen, generally, are driven round a ring heaped with the grain, and at once tread out the contents of the ears and break the straw into small soft pieces (*teben*), which in this form is the principal food of live stock in Palestine and elsewhere.* Threshing sledges armed underneath with iron teeth or sharp stones, and drawn by cattle or horses, are also sometimes driven round over the grain, the thresher often standing on the sledge to increase its power. One form of this sledge has rollers below—the "cart wheel" of the text.

* It is universally used in Central Asia. See p. 361.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE EGYPTIAN PARTY IN JERUSALEM.

THE fall of Samaria had alarmed Jerusalem and strengthened the influential party in it who, contrary to the counsel of the prophets, desired an alliance with Egypt, as a defence against Assyria.¹ Their policy was shortsighted, and misleading. The duplicity of Egypt, in withholding promised aid,² had led to the ruin of the northern kingdom. But the Nile power was able to delude the populations of Palestine, even after this exposure of its hollow faithlessness. The eyes of many of the Jewish aristocracy still turned to the Pharaoh as the hope of their country in its peril.

The year 720, the second after the fall of Samaria, was hence marked by another great uprising of the nations of Palestine and Southern Syria, instigated by the wily diplomacy of the Egyptian court. Hamath once more revolted, and the flames of rebellion spread south as far as the country of the Philistines. Unfortunately for the success of this renewed struggle for national life, Sargon³

¹ Hosea xii. 1.

² Isaiah xxxvi. 6.

³ The name of Sargon, which occurs in Isaiah xx. 1, had been lost for ages till recovered on the Assyrian monuments. He was supposed to be identical with Shalmaneser, Sennacherib or Esarhaddon. The verse of Isaiah was the only known evidence of his existence, and had been so for twenty-five centuries. Yet, when

had already crushed the brave Merodach Baladan at Babylon, and was free to turn his arms to the west. The tramp of his armies and the roll of his chariots were soon, therefore, again heard in the defiles of Lebanon and in the valley of the Orontes. A bold patriot had seized the throne of Hamath and had induced the crushed but not dispirited populations of Arpad, Damascus, Samaria, and Palestine generally, to join him; the king of Egypt renewing his promise of aid. But Sargon was too rapid in his movements for the Egyptian prince. Pressing on with a powerful host, he forced Itabihid, the new king of Hamath, to throw himself into the city of Gargar, afterwards known as Aroer, "the place of ruins."¹ There, however, he was besieged and taken prisoner by Sargon; ending his brief dream of royalty sadly, for he was mercilessly flayed alive by his captor. The city having been committed to the flames, terrible punishments were inflicted on the inhabitants. Hamath was stripped of more of its leading citizens, and 4,300 Assyrians left in their place as colonists; the district being put under an Assyrian governor.²

The conqueror then swept on to the south, punishing the remaining population of the northern kingdom, and invading Judah, which, under Hezekiah, prudently followed the counsel of Isaiah, and kept as neutral as possible. By this time Egypt had roused itself to action and marched to the support of Hanun, king of Gaza, one

the stones of the Assyrian mounds were uncovered, it was found that Isaiah was right, and that Sargon had been one of the greatest kings of Nineveh.

¹ Gesenius, *Theo.*

² Smith's *Assyria*, p. 94. Schrader, in *Rehm*, gives 714 as the date of the campaign, but this does not agree with his march towards Egypt in 720.

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of the Palestine league, as far as Raphia, twenty miles south of Gaza,¹ near the coast, on the road to Pelusium. Here, however, the joint Philistine and Egyptian armies were defeated in a decisive battle. Raphia itself was forthwith burned to the ground; Gaza taken, and its king carried off to Assyria, with many of his people.²

For the next eleven years Palestine breathed freely, as the Assyrians were too busy, elsewhere, to invade it during the long interval from 720 to 711, though their garrisons remained in the principal conquered towns. Affairs in the east demanded Sargon's undivided attention. The Hittite empire, which had at one time stretched from Asia Minor to the Euphrates, had already been weakened by repeated defeats,³ and virtually broken up; its capital, Carchemish, "the Fort of Chemosh," a rich and populous city, commanding the ordinary central passage over the Euphrates, at the junction of that river with the Chaboras, had been taken, and part of its inhabitants carried off. The dominion of a race which from early ages had ruled far and wide and had resisted with success even the power of the great Rameses II. of Egypt, was thus finally broken, though despairing struggles marked the next few years. Who these Hittites were is a question still undecided, though their pictures on the Egyptian monuments, with their shaven heads, only one lock on the crown remaining, and their wicker shields, remind us of Tartar or at least Turanian customs.

But, though Carchemish⁴ had fallen, other foes were astir. An empire held together only by force had no coherency, and was permanently, in one part or other, in revolt. Victory still, however, followed the standards of

¹ Kiepert's *Map*. ² Smith's *Assyria*, p. 95. ³ In 717.

⁴ The site of Carchemish was discovered by George Smith. It is that of the present town of Jerablus, the old Hierapolis.

Sargon. Nation after nation in the east was triumphantly subdued, and great deportations of their inhabitants made fresh insurrection more difficult.¹ Syria and Phenicia received large numbers of colonists from the campaign of 719; and in 715 fresh bands of prisoners from various countries were added to the foreign population of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes.² Far and wide the Great King saw his glory extending. The queen of conquered races in Northern Arabia sent gifts to him in sign of homage, and even the Pharaoh humbled himself to buy peace by paying tribute.³ The seal of a treaty concluded between Egypt and Assyria about this time has been found in the archives of Kouyunjik, one of the divisions of ancient Nineveh.⁴ It was not, however, till the year 711 that Sargon had stamped out the rebellion of his eastern provinces and crushed such other kingdoms as his lust of conquest induced him to attack. Burning cities, slaying, carrying off captives and plunder, on an imperial scale, at last made him supreme. He had desolated wide regions and called it peace.

But the long respite from war had given Syria and Palestine time to recover themselves, and the national

¹ The statement in 2 Kings xvii. 6, that after the fall of Samaria, Sargon placed many of its people in the cities, or as the Greek reads, the mountains of the Medes, is illustrated by a passage in the Great King's annals, in which he says, that having overrun a large part of Media he seized many of its towns, and annexed them to Assyria,—which would necessitate the bringing citizens from a distance.

² Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 318.

³ Schrader, p. 318. *Smith*, p. 100. *Maspero*, p. 300.

⁴ *Birch*, p. 165. Lenormant says it is part of the treaty made between Sibahi or Schabaka, suzerain of Egypt, and Hanun, king of Gaza, before the battle of Raphia, and that it shows part of both their seals. *L'Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 355, ed. of 1882.

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spirit was not yet extinct. Nor was Egypt willing to resign its independence, or to continue tributary to Sargon. Her ancient fame was still a power among the nations of Palestine, and she once more used it to stir up a wide revolt against Assyria. A league of the Philistines, Moab, Edom, and other kingdoms was formed, on which Hezekiah seems to have looked favourably. Egypt undertook to assist the confederates, though she never really did so. As in the past, they were "leaning on the stalk of a bruised papyrus reed;"¹ when they trusted the princes of the Nile Valley.

The years immediately before 711 had been busy with these plottings and preparations. Intense excitement must have prevailed through all the subject races of Palestine. In Jerusalem the most vigorous measures of defence were taken. The city walls were everywhere strengthened; towers were raised on them, and they were provided with warlike machines.² "The Mountain Castle," or Hill of Zion, was cut off by a ditch,³ and the rock scarped to hinder escalade.⁴ The houses near the walls were pulled down, to prevent their giving shelter to an enemy. A census of the population was also taken,⁵ to ascertain the force available in case of extremity, and arms of all kinds were provided in abundance. Jerusalem, since David's time, had extended chiefly to the east and north-east.⁶ Jotham had begun a wall, afterwards completed by Manasseh, enclosing the southern spur of the temple hill known as Ophel, and the springs

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 21.

² The words "raised it to the towers," 2 Chron. xxxii. 5, may mean either or both these preparations. I have included the two.

³ Jos., *Ant.*, VII. iii. 1. Isa. xxii. 11.

⁴ The scarped rock is still seen. Conder's *Handbook*, p. 336.

⁵ Isa. xxii. 8-11.

⁶ Conder, p. 338.

which supplied the city with water. Hezekiah now determined to close up their natural outlet, so as to prevent their being used by an enemy, and brought the stream within the walls by a conduit running westward from Gihon to a new pool¹ which still conveys water to the Pool of Siloam, and is connected by a rock-cut shaft with the ancient wall of Ophel.² An older reservoir, a little south of Siloam, was also utilized;³ this being the *lower*, as the other was the *upper* pool⁴ of the sacred narrative. The energy which could thus "dig the hard rock with iron, and make pools for waters" boded well for the future, and spoke loudly for the vigour of the king.

But even an Oriental ruler has limits to his power. Shebna, the prefect of the palace,⁵ perhaps a foreigner, and apparently a man of low origin—as his father's name is not stated—had risen to inordinate authority, which he used with overbearing tyranny and pride.⁷ He had built a great tomb for himself within the city,⁸ as if he were of royal blood, and his chariots and state were the wonder of the inhabitants.⁹ He was one of the prominent leaders of the aristocratic party who opposed Isaiah and his fellow prophets; a representative, and, as far as he dared, a patron of the old heathen party.¹⁰ He was devoted, moreover, to the policy of an Egyptian alliance, which the prophets denounced and the king seems to

¹ 2 Kings xx. 20.

² 2 Chron. xxxii. 4, 30. Eccles. xlviii. 17.

³ Isa. xxii. 11.

⁴ Isa. xxii. 9; xxxvi. 2.

⁵ Eccles. xlviii. 17.

⁶ Isa. xxii. 15.

⁷ His successor was to be very different from him, and was thus to earn the name of a "father" of the people.

⁸ Isa. xxii. 16.

⁹ Isa. xxii. 18.

¹⁰ See the name "Servant of Jehovah," given to Eliakim in contrast to him. Isa. xxii. 20.

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¹ Isa. i
² Isa. x

have disliked. He and his supporters were on many grounds the object of Isaiah's stern antipathy. They had retained their gold and silver idols and their pillars of Astarte, in their gardens, in spite of Hezekiah.¹ They clamoured for a refusal of the Assyrian tribute, fancying it could be done safely by the help of Egypt. If they could not get troops thence, they hoped for chariots and horses. Meanwhile, they defied the prophets, and drove them by threats and harshness to seek safety in concealment.² Before leaders and princes of the people, thus powerful and corrupt,³ the loftiest courage and self-sacrificing devotion alone could make a stand.

But Isaiah was equal to the occasion. He feared no man's face when he had a message to deliver to his fellow-citizens, from God. Shebna and the princes might threaten; the people might be hostile; his voice rose calm above all opposition, witnessing for his convictions and urging his inspired commission. Making his way to the presence of Shebna himself, he denounced him to his face.

"Hear what Jehovah says to thee,"⁴ he broke out, with fierce abruptness, before the astonished vizier. "What right have you here, and whom do you hope to bury here, in this holy city, that you have hewn out for yourself, in the hill side, a stately sepulchre; as if you and your family were royal—a sepulchre hewn in the top of the mount; as if you would hereafter look proudly down on the city at your feet? What have you to do here, that you have quarried out an everlasting habitation in the rocks?"

"Behold, Jehovah will hurl thee violently away, O man! He will surely seize you and roll you up like a ball, and hurl you, as from a sling, into a wide land. There you shall die, and thither your splendid chariots shall be carried off: thou shame of thy

¹ Isa. i. 29; ii. 8; x. 10; xxxi. 7. Micah v. 12, 13.

² Isa. xxx. 10, 20.

³ Micah iii. 8.

⁴ Isa. xxii. 15-25.

lord's house! I will drive you from your station, and pull you down from your high place, says Jehovah!

"And it shall come to pass in that day that I, Jehovah, will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, and clothe him with your robe of office, and put on him your official girdle, and commit your authority into his hand, and he will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, which you have not been, and to the House of Judah. And I will lay on his shoulder the official key of the House of David, which you have borne,—the key of the palace. What he opens or permits, no man shall shut or forbid,¹ and what he shuts, no man shall open; for his authority shall be supreme. And he shall not be cast out like you, but I will establish him in his office as a man drives a peg into a sure place. The dignity of his father's house shall have its glorious seat in him. On him shall rest all its honour; its humbler and higher branches will hang on him, as the small vessel, the costly goblet and the mean flagon hang from the sure pin.

"In that day, says Jehovah of Hosts, shall you, who hitherto have been a peg driven into a sure place, be removed, cut down and fall, and those that depended on you shall come to the ground, for Jehovah has said it."

How long an interval elapsed before Shebna's disgrace, is not told, but the prophet's words were soon verified, for we next find Shebna in the lower office of king's scribe.² At what time he was carried to Assyria is unknown, but doubtless this part of the prophecy was literally fulfilled as well as the other.

Meanwhile Isaiah strained every nerve to prevent the secret negotiations with Egypt from being carried out. If earnest inspired eloquence could have saved his country from such a calamity, his must have done so. One oration delivered at this period has happily been preserved.³

"Behold, Jehovah rideth on a swift cloud, and comes to Egypt.

¹ See *Lightfoot*, on Matt. xvi. 19.

² Isa. xxxvi. 3, 22; xxxvii. 2.

³ Isa. xix.

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and the no-gods of Egypt tremble before Him:¹ the heart of Egypt melts in its bosom. And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians; brother shall fight against brother; neighbour against neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.² And the heart of Egypt will die within her; and I will bring to nought her wisdom, so that they shall have to turn themselves to their no-gods, and to the muttering sorcerers, and to their oracles, and to the magicians. And I shall give up Egypt into the hands of a hard master,³ and a fierce king shall reign over it, says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts.

"And the waters shall fail from the Nile,⁴ and the river dry up and be empty; the branches of the river shall become corrupt, and the canals be emptied and dry. The reed and the flag shall wither. The meadows on the Nile banks, and on the banks of its mouths, and everything sown beside the river shall wither, and vanish, and be no more. Then shall the fishermen lament, and all who cast hook into the Nile grieve, and they that spread nets on the face of the streams pine for want. They that work the fine combed flax, and those that weave white cotton cloths shall grow pale; the rich of the land shall be ruined; the lower classes troubled in heart.

¹ Exod. xii. 12.

² Brugsch gives a list from the memorial stone of Piankhi, the first successful invader of Egypt from the south, of twenty petty kings and satraps among whom Egypt was at this time divided. He adds, "The great kingdom of Egypt was split up into little dependent states, which leant now on Ethiopia, now on Assyria, as each foreign master gained preponderance for the time." *Hist.*, vol. ii. p. 229. These kinglets and satraps, crushed for the time by So, or Schabaka and his successors, were constantly on the outlook to revolt and raise civil war. This, as the prophet says, they hereafter succeeded in doing, to the final ruin of the land.

³ Perhaps an allusion to Sargon's victory of Raphia, 720, or to the conquest by Esarhaddon in 672. He divided the country into twelve small tributary states. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 135. *Assurbanipal*, pp. 15, 16.

⁴ In the civil disturbances great misery was caused by the neglect of the dykes and the consequent failure of irrigation. *Herod.*, ii. 137.

"The princes of Zoan¹ are fools: the sage counsellors² of the Pharaoh give unwise counsel! How can ye each say to the Pharaoh, 'I am a son of the wise; a descendant of ancient kings'?"³ If so, where is their wisdom now? Let them tell thee, O Pharaoh, and make thee know what Jehovah of Hosts has purposed respecting Egypt!

"The princes of Tanis are befooled! the princes of Noph⁴ are deceived! the priests, who are the corner stone of the castles of Egypt have led it astray. Jehovah has put into the heart of Egypt a spirit of folly, so that they lead it astray in all it does, as a drunken man staggers to and fro in his vomit, and neither head nor tail, palm branch or rush—the high nor the low of Egypt—have power to do anything.

"In that day the Egyptians shall be like women, and shall tremble and be terrified at the waving of the arm of Jehovah of Hosts when He swings it over them. And the land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt; at the mention of its name, Egypt will tremble at the fate which Jehovah of Hosts hangs over it."

But the coming of the Messiah shall bring blessing even to Egypt.

"In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan, and make their vows to Jehovah of Hosts: one shall be called Ir ha heres—the city of the destroyed idols."

¹ Zoan was the seat of a local dynasty, under the Ethiopian kings. These monarchs did not put down the petty kings whom they had found in the country, but ruled as lords paramount. *Lenormant*, vol. ii. p. 350. The utter desolation of the whole district, for ages past—though it was formerly so luxuriantly fertile—is noticed by all travellers. See Ebers' *Durch Gosen*, in the first chapters, *passim*. Also, *H. with Bible*, vol. ii. pp. 26, 27.

² The council of priests. See vol. ii. pp. 19, 131.

³ The priests claimed royal descent.

⁴ *Memphis*.

⁵ Herzfeld, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 446. Five cities means a small part. Hebrew was the sacred language, consecrated to the worship of Jehovah. The Egyptian Jews became so numerous that the Bible was translated into Greek for them. Long before

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In that day there shall be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and an obelisk on its border to Jehovah. And it shall be for a sign and a witness to Jehovah of Hosts in Egypt—that when they cry to Jehovah because of their oppressors, He may send them a helper and champion to deliver them. And Jehovah shall make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall own Jehovah in that day, and shall present offerings and gifts, and make vows to Jehovah and perform them.

“Thus Jehovah will smite Egypt; smiting and healing; when they return to Jehovah He will be favourable to them and will heal them.”

In those Messianic days, Assyria, the rival of Egypt, shall be so no longer. Peace will reign between them, for Assyria will be converted to God.

“In that day there shall be an open highway for peaceful intercourse, from Egypt to Assyria; the Assyrians will come to Egypt; the Egyptians shall go to Assyria; and both Egyptians and Assyrians shall do homage to Jehovah. In that day Israel shall be third with Egypt and Assyria in this brotherhood of peace; and, instead of an object of angry contention between them, will be a blessing in the midst of the earth, as the instrument of their reconciliation and of the diffusion of true religion.

“Thus Jehovah of Hosts shall bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people, Assyria, the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.”

But the voice of the prophet was not always so tender. The plots of Shebna and his party, and the imminent dangers of the time, roused him to fierce and indignant protestations, in which the Egyptian faction in Jerusalem were not spared.

Christ, Egypt had many synagogues. But the prophecy has a fuller reference to the distant future when the kingdom of the Messiah will be universal. When Egypt was conquered by Islam (A.D. 640), the prophecy had been wonderfully fulfilled, for Christianity was largely professed in it.

"Woe 'o the Lioness of God,"¹ he begins on one occasion,—
 "the Lioness of God—the city² where David fixed his abode!" Add
 year to year; let the feasts go their round; when the predestined
 time has come I will bring distress on the Lioness of God, and
 there will be sighing and moaning. Still, withal, she shall be to
 me the Lioness of God!

"Yet I will encamp round thee; I will surround thee with
 watch posts,⁴ and raise battering machines against thee. And
 thou shalt speak from the earth; thy words shall come faintly
 from the ground, and thy voice shall rise, hollow, like a ghost's,
 from the earth; thy feeble whisper shall come from the dust.
 And the number of thy foes shall be like fine dust; the host of
 the mighty ones, coming against thee, shall be like the flying
 chaff of the threshing floor, and all this shall come suddenly, in a
 moment."

But in her extremity God will help her.

"But Zion will be saved⁵ by Jehovah of Hosts as with the
 crash of thunder; with earthquake and a great noise; with whirl-
 wind and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire! And as a
 dream, as a vision of the night, shall be the multitude of nations
 that encamp against the Lioness of God; that fight against her
 and her defences, and press her sorely. And as when the hungry
 man dreams that he eats, and on waking finds his mouth empty,
 or as when a thirsty man dreams that he is drinking, and on
 waking is faint, and his soul still craves a draught; so shall it
 be with the multitude of all the heathen who fight against Mount
 Zion!"⁶

There is no need, therefore, to seek human help in
 Egypt or elsewhere. Jehovah, alone, is an all-sufficient
 Protector. The Assyrian will assuredly come, but God
 will destroy him and save Jerusalem and Judah. Yet
 the false prophets and the unfaithful leaders of the people

¹ Isa. xxix.

² Jerusalem.

³ Lit. "encamped."

⁴ Delitzsch. Knobel. Diestel. Naegelsbach.

⁵ Naegelsbach. Others have, "visited."

⁶ The enemies of Zion shall be disappointed of their prey;
 their attack will be foiled.

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have refused to trust in God, and have counselled an Egyptian alliance, which would bring ruin. The prophet has spoken a riddle, he will now explain it.

"Stand wonderstruck and stare, ye people, at what I tell you; shut your eyes and make yourselves blind, by your dull unbelief which understands not my words! The day will show their truth!

"You are drunk, but not with wine; you reel, but not with strong drink. Jehovah has poured on you the spirit of deep sleep; your eyes—the prophets—are fast shut in slumber; your heads—the seers—has Jehovah covered with the mantle of sleep.¹ Hence, the Vision of His Will, made known by me, His servant, has become to you like the words of a sealed roll, respecting which, if it be given to one who knows letters, with the request to read it, he says, 'I cannot, for it is sealed.' It is shut up to you as much as a roll delivered to one who cannot read, who has to say that he is unlettered.

"Therefore the Lord has said, Since this people draw near to Me with their mouth only, and honour Me only with their lips, while their heart is far from Me, and their worship of Me is but outward, according to the commandments of men;² therefore, behold, I will still further deal wonderfully with them, wonderfully beyond thought; so that the wisdom of their wise men shall be proved folly, and the understanding of their knowing ones shall hide itself, ashamed!

"Woe to those who try hard to shroud their plans from Jehovah; who seek to work them out in secret,³ and say, 'who sees or knows us?' Out on your perverseness! Is the clay to be as highly thought of as the potter who works it, that his handiwork shall say to its maker, 'He did not make me,' or the thing formed say of him that formed it, 'He has no understanding'? Judah is the clay, Jehovah is the potter; are you wiser or abler than He, to do what is best for the land, that you take the work into your own hands, out of His, by your plotting?

¹ Orientals cover their heads in sleeping. Niebuhr, *Arab.*, p. 10. Sonnini's *Egypt*, vol. ii. p. 334.

² Ritual prescriptions, which were already carefully laid down. Hos. viii. 12. Jer. viii. 8.

³ Referring to the secret schemes for a treaty with Egypt.

"Ye little know what is before you! In a very short time, to the eye of faith, it will be, as the proverb says, that 'Lebanon shall be turned into fruitful gardens,' and what are now 'fruitful gardens will be counted a forest.' A great spiritual change will take place. In that day those who are now deaf to my words shall hear what is written, and the eyes of those who are now blind to the truth will see, amidst the gloom and darkness of their visitation. And the humble shall increase their joy in Jehovah; the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the tyrannical great man shall then have come to nought, and the scoffers of to-day shall have ceased, and those that now watch to do iniquity shall be rooted out,—those who condemn men for a word, and lay snares for those who complain before the judges at the city gate,¹ and drive away the upright from the judgment seat through the lies of false witnesses.²

"Therefore, thus saith Jehovah to the House of Jacob—He that redeemed Abraham from all dangers—Jacob shall no longer, when that time comes, be ashamed; neither shall his face any longer grow pale. For when he, or rather his sons,³ sees the work of My hands in their midst, they shall hallow My name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel. And even those who were of a perverse spirit shall come to understanding, and the murmurers accept instruction."

This oration, as we may call it, was followed by others, in a similar spirit. After a time the Egyptian party succeeded in getting an embassy actually sent off to the Nile, but Isaiah continued his fearless denunciations and warnings; mingled, indeed, as was natural to his patriotic heart, with glorious pictures of the Messianic future.

"Woe to the rebellious children,"⁴ saith Jehovah," he bursts out, "who form schemes which are not from Me, and an alliance⁵ contrary to My mind—to heap sin on sin. Who set out

¹ Hosea iv. 1.

² Lit., "a mere nothing." I have followed Delitzsch.

³ By some, the words "his sons" is thought to be a gloss.

⁴ Isaiah xxx.

⁵ Delitzsch.

to go down to Egypt without having asked at My mouth if they should do so; to flee to the protection of the Pharaoh, and seek shelter under the shadow of Egypt! Pharaoh's protection shall be your dishonour; the hoped for shelter under the shadow of Egypt your disgrace. For the princes of Judah have appeared at Zoan; her ambassadors have arrived at Hanes.¹ But all Judah shall be ashamed of a people who cannot profit them,² who are neither a help nor of use, but bring shame and disgrace.

"Yet in spite of this My people carry their riches on the shoulders of asses' colts, their treasures on the humps of camels—the gates by which they hope to secure an alliance—into a land of trouble and distress, from out of whose deserts come the lioness and lion, the viper and flying serpent³—to a people who cannot profit them.⁴ For the promise of Egyptian help is vain and worthless; therefore, I call Egypt 'the Braggart that talks but sits still.'⁵

"Now go, write it on a tablet before them, and inscribe it in a roll, for a witness hereafter, for ever! For Judah is a rebellious people, children false to God their Father, children that will not listen to the teaching of Jehovah. Who say to the seers, 'Ye shall tell us no visions such as you have told us, only of coming evil,' and to the prophets, 'Ye shall not tell us the naked truth: speak pleasant things to us, prophecy good fortune and prosperity

¹ Heracleopolis Magna, the seat, like Tanis, of a local dynasty.

² Sargon says, "The people and their evil chiefs, to fight against me, unto Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, a monarch who could not save them, their presents carried, and besought his alliance." Smith's *Assyrian Canon*, p. 130.

³ Dr. Tristram fancies the name, "fiery flying serpent," is a poetical expression for the swiftly darting and springing serpents of the desert. *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 278.

⁴ The words, "The burden of the beasts of the South," seem an interpolation. *Ewald. Diestel. Knobel. Eichhorn* translates them, however, "A burden upon beasts making for the south." Delitzsch makes them, "An oracle on the hippopotami of the south."

⁵ Rahab is a Hebrew or Hebraized name for Egypt, meaning "boaster," "braggart." They promise but "sit still," that is, do nothing.

to us, instead of Assyrian oppression.¹ Leave your old ways, turn from your old course, and henceforth let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.²

"Therefore, thus says the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word of Mine, spoken by My prophets,³ and trust in oppression⁴ and crooked ways, and stay yourselves on them—this sin will be to you like a rent in a high wall, which thus threatens to come down, and bulges out to its fall; the crash will come suddenly, in a moment, and shiver it as one shivers a clay pitcher, breaking it small, so that, in its wreck, there will not be left a sherd large enough to lift fire from the hearth, or water out of the cistern.⁵

"For thus has the Lord, even Jehovah, said, the Holy One of Israel, 'By returning to Me and resting on Me you shall be saved; in keeping quiet and in confidence on Me shall be your strength.' But you would not do this, and have said, 'No; we will fly to the battle on eager war horses, got from Egypt.'

¹ Lit. "prophecy falsehood."

² Or, "take out of our sight, the Holy One of Israel."

³ To trust in God, as able to uphold them without help from Egypt.

⁴ By the heavy burdens which a rebellion against Assyria would impose.

⁵ This is an allusion to the custom of breaking worthless pottery into very small fragments, or even to powder, to make "homrah," which, when mixed with lime, forms the cement used universally in Palestine, and the East at large, for coating the sides and bottoms of cisterns, reservoirs, aqueducts and the like, and making them thoroughly watertight. Men may still be seen every autumn, outside Jerusalem, sitting on the ground crushing a heap of large fragments of pottery into "homrah," which they sell as a regular article of trade. They make it by pushing back and forward over the mass in front of them, a heavy rounded stone, choosing a rocky place on which to lay their heaps for the process. When the whole is thoroughly broken, it is fit for sale—a coarse kind of homrah consisting of pieces about a quarter of an inch square; the finer kind being similar fragments ground to powder. In this state it is used to make the roofs and walls of houses watertight. See Neil, pp. 112-128.

Therefore, ye will indeed flee, but it will be before the foe! Ye have said, 'We will ride swift horses.' Yes! you will indeed ride off the field on them, chased by swift pursuers. A thousand of you shall flee at the war-cry¹ of one of the enemy; at the war-cry of five your whole army shall flee, till ye be scattered like the solitary flag-pole² on the top of a mountain, or a lonely banner³ on a hill."

But the prophet cannot continue this strain of threatening. His heart yearns over his nation, who are still the people of God, and he proceeds to temper his sternness by gracious promises.

"But when it has come to this, Jehovah will have pity on you. He will long till He can be gracious to you, and will rise from His throne⁴ to have mercy on you. For Jehovah is a God of righteousness: happy are all they that hope patiently for Him!"

Judah cannot be suffered to perish before its enemies. Moreover, it will turn from its sins, under the pressure of its troubles, and then shall come the glorious days of the Messiah!

"Thou people dwelling in Zion and Jerusalem—Ye shall weep no more as ye did, when the foe came up against you! Jehovah will assuredly be gracious to you when you cry to Him for help; as soon as He hears He will answer you! Even when you are most pressed in the siege He will give you bread, though in short measure, and water, though little, and your teachers, the prophets, will not need to hide themselves any longer from the hatred of the great, but your eyes shall look on them. And as

¹ *Eichhorn. Knobel. Diestel.*

² Translated "mast" in Isa. xxxiii. 23. Ezek. xxvii. 5.

³ Translated "pole," Num. xxi. 8, 9. Elsewhere, "ensign" or "banner." Flags were raised on hills to give warning of an invasion or as a rallying point for fugitives. Isa. v. 26; xi. 12; xviii. 3; lxii. 10. Jer. iv. 6, 21. Ps. lx. 4. Delitzsch renders "beacon" by "pine-tree."

⁴ *Diestel.*

often as you stray either to the right hand or the left, your ears shall hear words behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' And you will strip off, as no longer holy, the silver overlaid on some of your graven images, and the coating of gold on others; you shall cast away the images themselves¹ as you do what is loathsome; you will say to them, 'Out, from this.'

"Then will God give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and rich and nourishing bread from the increase of your fields. Your cattle, in that day, will feed in wide pastures. And the oxen and young asses that till the ground will eat mixed provender,² seasoned with salt, winnowed with the shovel and the basket³. And on all the lofty mountains, and on every high hill shall be running streams and flowing waters—in the day of the great slaughter of the foes of Jehovah, whether the Assyrian or the scornful in Jerusalem,—and the towers in which they trusted fall. And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold—as the light of seven days⁴—in the day when Jehovah binds up the wounds of His people, and heals the bruises of His stroke.

But now, once again, the prophet sees before him the judgments impending on Assyria, which are contrasted with the joy of Israel, redeemed by Jehovah from its hand.

"Behold, the Name of Jehovah comes from afar. His anger burns; His approach is terrible;⁵ His lips full of indignation;

¹ The images were of wood, overlaid with silver or gold.

² A mixture of barley or oats with vetches and beans, all sown and reaped together. Pliny, *H. N.*, xviii: 15, 41.

³ Cleaned after threshing, by being thrown up against the wind from a shovel or a basket. The straw broken small by the feet of the oxen in threshing, as already noticed, is the usual food of cattle in Palestine; but clean grain will be given them in these happy times. See pp. 361, 372.

⁴ Even nature shall be glorified in the triumph of the Messianic times. See Rom. viii. 19 ff.

⁵ Delitzsch and Cheyne translate this, "in thick uplifting of smoke." Diestel and Ewald are in effect as in the text. The image is that of a storm coming along the heavens from afar.

His tongue like devouring fire; His breath as an overflowing flood, reaching even to the neck; to winnow the nations with the sieve of destruction and to put a bridle, turning them astray, in the jaws of the nations!

"But ye shall sing, then, as in the eve of the Passover feast,¹ and ye shall have gladness of heart as when one travels on to the sound of flutes, going up to the mount of Jehovah, the Rock of Israel!"²

"Jehovah will make the majesty of His voice³ to be heard; the thunder shall be as it were His cry of war, when He comes on against the foe: He will show the lighting down of His arm, to destroy him in the fury of His indignation, amidst the bursting of storm clouds and a tempest of rain and hail.⁴ For at the thunder of Jehovah shall Asshur tremble, when he is struck down by the rod of the Almighty. And at every blow of the avenging rod, which Jehovah shall lay upon him, will Judah sound aloud its timbrels and harps; its deliverance drawing nigh. With stroke on stroke of His swinging mace will Jehovah fight against the enemy. Already is a Tophet prepared; for the burning of the corpse⁵ of the Assyrian king is it made ready. Jehovah has made the pile high and broad; fire and wood are in abundance; the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it.

¹ *Gesenius*. Songs of praise and thanks were sung then, followed by the Great Hallel—Psalms cxiii.—cxviii.

² Ps. cxxii. 1-4.

³ "The voice of God" is the thunder. Ps. xxix.

⁴ A prediction suitable to the destruction of Sennacherib's army, though the agency is here described in the grand imagery of poetry.

⁵ Among the Hebrews only the bodies of criminals were burned. Lev. xx. 14; xxi. 9. Jos. vii. 25. *Winer*, art. *Begraben*. A place in the valley of Hinnom, on the south side of Jerusalem, where human beings were burned in the Canaanitish period, and where in the days of Ahaz and at other times they burned children to Moloch, was called Tophet—a place to be spat upon, or abhorred. The bodies of many Assyrian dignitaries were probably burnt by the Jews after Sennacherib's flight. Jer. vii. 31; xix. 13. 2 Kings xxiii. 10. 2 Chron. xxviii. 3.

But the Egyptian faction were too strong and determined to be easily turned aside. Isaiah, therefore, returned to the attack on them, again and again.

"Woe,"¹ says he, in another oration, delivered doubtless to excited throngs, and perhaps before the leaders of the faction themselves—"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and put their trust in the horses of Pharaoh, and their confidence in his chariots, because they are many, and in his horsemen, because they are valiant,² but never look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek after Jehovah!

"Yet He also is Wise—wiser than they—and will bring evil to pass, instead of good—evil which their wisdom cannot avert,—and will not take back His words, once spoken, He will arise against the party of the wicked—the great men of Jerusalem who oppose His prophets—and against their Egyptian allies who help them to do evil.

"Nor can they resist Him! For the Egyptians are men, and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit. Therefore when Jehovah stretches out His hand in wrath, the helper will stumble, and he that is helped will fall; they will perish together."

Jehovah will put the Assyrian to flight without the help of Egypt, and will Himself protect Jerusalem.

"For thus has Jehovah spoken to me. As when the lion and the young lion growl over their prey, he who calls out a crowd of shepherds against them is not afraid of their cries or dismayed by their roaring,—so Jehovah of Hosts will descend, to fight for Mount Zion and her hill. As birds hovering over their nests protect their young, so will Jehovah defend Jerusalem. He will hover over it and protect it; He will pass over it³ and deliver it.

"Turn ye then, O children of Israel, to Him from whom ye have so foully revolted! For in that day, the day of your sore need,

¹ Isaiah xxxi.

² The mountainous Judah had few horses or chariots; the level Egypt had many.

³ Like the angel on the night of the passover.

ye shall find that your idols cannot protect you, and every man will cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, the sinful things which your own hands have made. And Aashur shall fall by the sword, not of man, but of God; the sword not of a mortal, but of the Eternal, shall devour him. He shall flee before the sword and his young men shall be made slaves.¹ And the fugitive Assyrian leader shall pass by his strongholds, for fear, not seeking a refuge in them in his flight, for he shall be afraid of the Jewish ensign floating from them, saith Jehovah, whose homo-fire is in Zion and His hearth in Jerusalem."

Such thoughts naturally raised in the mind of the prophet the thought of the happy times of the Messiah, so dear to his heart. He therefore continues:—

"Behold, the King shall reign in righteousness,² and the princes rule justly,³ in those days, when the idols shall be cast away and the tyranny of the Assyrian destroyed. And A Man⁴ shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as streams of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great cliff in a sun-scorched land!⁵ And the eyes of those who see will no longer be dim, as now, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken attentively. And the heart of the thoughtless will have wise understanding, and the stammering tongue will be

¹ Prisoners of war were thus treated in antiquity. They were set to "task service" in the field, in herding cattle, in building, and otherwise. Josh. ix. 21. 1 Kings ix. 21. Deut. xx. 11.

² Isaiah xxxii.

³ Cheyne thinks that the prophet may have had the hope that Hezekiah would distinguish himself thus, and that it is probable there was a great religious revival after the deliverance. But in its full sense the prophecy can only be understood of the Divine Messiah.

⁴ *Sept.* "The Man." Kay renders it "a man"; others "every man," that is, all the rulers, and the king himself. It will be true, indeed, of all, in the Messianic reign, that they will help and protect each other, but the Messiah, Himself, will be the strength and glory of all.

⁵ Virgil, *Georg.*, iii. 145.

clear and flowing.¹ The ungodly man shall no more be called honourable, nor the knave be greeted as worthy. For the ungodly man speaks ungodliness; his heart works iniquity, to practise evil and utter error concerning Jehovah, and thus leaves the hungry soul empty, and takes away the drink of the thirsty. As to the knave, the means he uses, and the plans he designs are evil. He devises wicked schemes to destroy the poor with lying words, even when he speaks that which is true. But the noble soul deviseth noble things and stands fast to them."

Turning now to the women assembled, we may suppose, in the background, or at the side of the audience, the prophet addresses them separately:—

"Arise, ye women that sit, unconcerned, at your ease; hear my voice, ye daughters so carelessly confident; give ear to my speech! One year more,² and ye shall tremble, ye who think yourselves so secure! For the vintage shall be consumed, the fruit harvest will not be yours. The enemy shall have both. Tremble ye women that are at ease; be in dismay ye confident ones. Strip off your fine array; make you bare; and gird sackcloth, for lamentation, on your loins. Beat on your bosoms, in sorrow, for your pleasant fields, for your fruitful vineyards. On the land of My people shall come up thorns and briers; yea on all the happy homes of this joyous city. For the fine mansions round it will be forsaken; the hum of the city be silent;³ Hill and Watch Tower,⁴ where your gardens and mansions lie, will be for hiding places of foxes, and the like, for ever; a joy of wild asses; a pasture for flocks, until the Spirit be poured out on us from on high. Then shall the pasture-wastes become a fruit-covered land, and the fruit-covered land will be no more esteemed in that glorious time than a mere forest is now. Justice will then reign in the pasture-wastes, and righteousness dwell in the fruit-covered

¹ The mocker will speak seriously.

² "A year, to the day, from this." *Ewald*. So, virtually, *Delitzsch*, *Diestel*, and others.

³ Lit. "lonely," "desolate."

⁴ Ophel, on the south of the city, and apparently the tower on the east of Zion. *Diestel*.

land. And the effect of that righteousness shall be peace, and its fruit quiet and security for ever. My people shall dwell in peaceful houses, and quiet resting places.

"When the hail of Jehovah's wrath¹ shall smite down the forest-like army of the foe; when Jerusalem shall have been brought to direst extremity, and shall have turned to its God, shall all this happen. In those blissful days, happy will ye be who sow beside the countless waters that will then irrigate the land, and who turn out the ox and the ass to graze on the quiet pastures!"

The rebellion of Ashdod and the revolt of most of the nations of Palestine in B.C. 712-711, brought the Assyrians to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, to fulfil, unconsciously, the prophecies so lately uttered respecting them. Sargon, himself, being too busy in the east to come in person, an army under a Tartan or general commanding-in-chief, was sent, to suppress the symptoms of revolt and of confederacy with Egypt. Ashdod, "the Strong," was the centre of the movement, and the first attack was, therefore, against it. "Azuri, king of Ashdod," says Sargon, in his annals;² "made up his mind not to be obedient to (the god) Asshur, and not to pay his tribute any longer. He sent to the kings, his neighbours,³ messengers hostile to Assyria. Then I meditated vengeance and replaced him by another in the rule of his lands. I elevated his brother Akhimit to the royalty in his stead. But the people of Syria inclined to revolt, and were tired of the government of Akhimit, and raised Yaman to the throne, though, like his predecessor, not its legitimate master. In the fury of my heart I did not divide my army, and I did not diminish the ranks, but I marched against Ashdod with my

¹ Isaiah xxix. 6; xxx. 27, 30.

² *Records of the Past*, vol. vii. pp. 26, 40. Menant, *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 169.

³ Hezekiah, doubtless among others.

chariots and horsemen, my warriors and my baggage, and the united host followed steadily in the footmarks of my sandals. I besieged and took Ashdod and Girut Ashdodim. I took the gods who inhabited these towns, with the gold, the silver, and the whole contents of Yaman's palace. I then rebuilt these towns (which had been burnt down) and settled in them people whom my arm had conquered; (bringing them from other parts, to take the place of the inhabitants who had been carried off). I put over them my lieutenant as governor. I treated them as Assyrians, and they have since obeyed me." In another place he adds that "Yaman left his wife, his sons, his daughters, and fled through the lands of the midday sun, to Libya.¹ . . . Then the king of Libya was overwhelmed by the immense fear of Asshur, my lord, and bound Yaman's hands and feet with iron chains and sent (him), by envoys, to my presence in Assyria."

No help had come from Egypt, the selfish fomentor of the rebellion, and the resistance to Assyria at once collapsed. Sargon appears to have marched from Philistia into Judah to crush any plot of the Egyptian faction in Jerusalem, and thus came in contact with Hezekiah. It must have been at this time that he "subdued the remote land of Judah," as he boasts, in one of his inscriptions, though unfortunately no details are given. But the march of Assyrian armies were always marked by the same horrors, and in this case must have fulfilled

¹ This is Oppert's translation. Lenormant says that the part indicated was a petty kingdom of the Egyptian Delta. *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 356. Schabaka, or So, who had deceived Hosea of Samaria, and fought with Assyria at Raphia, died in 706, a year before Sargon. *Lenormant*, vol. ii. p. 356. Tirhakah succeeded him.

Isaiah's prediction only too literally. Like his predecessors, Sargon boasts of his cruelty in his campaigns. He tells us that he "treated Hanun, king of Gaza, like a slave," carried off whole populations, burnt cities with fire after sacking them, flayed men alive, killed multitudes beyond number of all classes, and swept like a desolating storm over any country he invaded. The sufferings of Judah must have been indescribable.

The terror of Sargon's victories at Ashdod and elsewhere was extreme, even in the farthest south. The king of Meroë,¹ he tells us, "had never sent ambassadors to the kings my ancestors, to demand peace and friendship and acknowledge the power of the god Merodach. But the huge fear of my majesty touched him; He recognized the greatness of the god Adar, and turned his steps towards Assyria and prostrated himself before me."²

The world was kept in these years in constant excitement by Sargon's military enterprises. Scarcely had Palestine been quieted before a new campaign on the Lower Euphrates filled all mouths with fresh wonders. Merodach Baladan had now reigned at Babylon for twelve years,³ and had fortified it strongly. He had, moreover, constantly sent ambassadors to other countries to form leagues of mutual defence against the Great King. His capital had repeatedly been taken by the Assyrians, and this revival of its power was intolerable to Sargon. Pretences for an invasion were easily made. Its king had "not fulfilled the commands of the great gods and had neglected their worship." He had, more-

¹ So the word is translated by Oppert and Menant.

² Menant, p. 186.

³ *Inscriptions des Sargonides*, pp. 26, 27. *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 187.

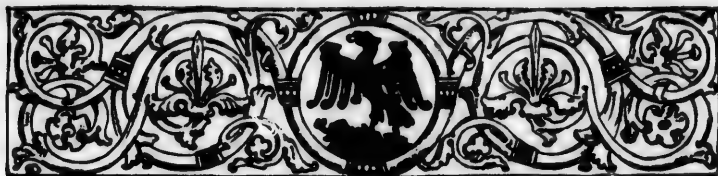
over, "leagued himself with the king of Elam, on the east side of the mouths of the Tigris ; had stirred up the wandering Arabs against Assyria, and prepared for war." But at Sargon's approach Merodach Baladan strengthened his fortresses, and withdrew to the marshy districts near the mouth of the Euphrates, where defence was easiest. He had left the inland towns to the care of his generals, choosing the city of Dur-Alkhar as the spot at which to make a stand. Strengthening it by broad ditches filled from the river, he, here, awaited the enemy. But Sargon once more triumphed, scattering the forces drawn up to oppose him, and making more than 18,000 men prisoners, besides taking all the beasts of burden in the camp. Fleeing still farther south, the remnant of the patriot army took refuge in the inaccessible marshes and reed beds of Ukeni. Thither Sargon followed them, as far as possible, hewing down the palm-trees, destroying the gardens, burning every house or mansion, and reducing the whole region to the greatest misery.

Merodach Baladan, however, escaped to the mountains of Elam, beyond the Tigris, to await better times, leaving Babylon to fall into the hands of the enemy, against whom he was powerless. Passing the interval till the next fighting season, in its palaces, Sargon then found himself once more confronted by his fearless opponent, who, this time, had made the city of Dur-Yakin, in the marshy south, his central stronghold. But fortune still went against the hero. He had surrounded the town with a huge moat into which he turned a stream from the river. The whole surface of the ground, moreover, was broken up by a net-work of canals, to impede the movements of the invaders. "His banners," says Sargon, "floated like birds along the banks of these streams." He could not, however, stand against the Assyrian attack. "The

waters of the canals bore away in their course the bodies of the rebels, thick as the leaves of trees." The Arab tribes in Merodach Baladan's army fled, and he himself retired into the city, leaving behind, in the camp, his golden throne, his royal umbrella, his golden sceptre, his silver chariot, and the splendid furniture of his tent. But the town itself presently fell; its ramparts were destroyed; its houses burned and left a heap of ruins. The queen, and the royal family, were taken "as slaves," with all they possessed, and the palace sacked. But the life of the king was spared, and his wife and family, as we may suppose, restored to him, though he was not allowed to retain his kingdom; an Assyrian viceroy being installed in his place. Thus passed the spring and summer of the year 709, closing by Sargon's re-entering Babylon in triumph. "There," says he, "I betook myself to the temples of Bel, the judge of the gods. With exulting heart and joyful countenance I grasped the hands of the great lord, Merodach, the august god."¹ Sargon was now, finally, king of Babylon as well as of Assyria.

¹ *Annales des rois d'Assyrie*, p. 189. Lenormant has a striking essay on Merodach Baladan in his *Premières Civilisations*, vol. ii. p. 202 ff., under the title of *Un Patriote Babylonien du VIII^e Siècle avant notre ère*.





CHAPTER XV.

THE LATER YEARS OF SARGON.

THE departure of the Assyrian army from before Jerusalem had vindicated to the letter the promises of Isaiah, given in the name of God, that the Holy City, though invested by the foe, would be delivered from his hand. But the condition of the country after the invasion was sad in the extreme, and, still worse, the moral state of the people proved to have been little benefited by the discipline through which it had passed. It is at this time that we catch the only glimpse of Isaiah's personal environments. "In the year when the Tartan came to Ashdod,"¹ he tells us: "When Sargon,² the king

¹ Isaiah xx. 1 ff.

² It has already been noticed (see note to p. 373) how striking and even startling it is to meet the name of Sargon here. It occurs, as has been said, nowhere else in the Scriptures, and all knowledge of the great king who bore it had so entirely died away, that even so late as 1872 we find Knobel and Diestel entirely ignorant of his existence (*Isaiah*, p. 169). Yet his huge palace at Khorsabad, near Nineveh, with the town surrounding it, retained his name in the East, till after the Arab conquest. An old Arab geographer speaks of Khorsabad as *adjoining the ancient ruined city of Sargon*. *Asiat. Soc. Journ.*, vol. xii. p. 419, n. 2. But beyond this long forgotten allusion, discovered by chance in our own day, there was no record of Sargon having ever lived, except in this verse of Isaiah, till the ruins of Nineveh

of Assyria sent him—and he fought against Ashdod and took it, the Lord spake by Isaiah.” He was commanded to perform a symbolical act, the only one recorded of him. The characteristics of the older prophets had in this respect ceased, and all-powerful words had taken the place of emblematic action. But Isaiah was for once directed to take off the black outer sackcloth mantle of coarse linen, or hair, the robe of mourning, which it seems—like other prophets¹—he habitually wore, and to remove the sandals from his feet, and go about Jerusalem thus “naked” and barefooted, for three years, as a sign that Egypt and Ethiopia should be utterly humbled within that time. Egyptians and Ethiopians, young men and old, sent to aid the rebellion of the Palestine nations, were to be led off captive by the Great King, similarly stripped and humbled. Nothing less than such a lengthened enforcement of the great lesson of the worthlessness of an Egyptian alliance would impress it on the populations of Judah and Canaan at large. The overthrow of Ashdod and the other revolted provinces must, however, have convinced multitudes that Jehovah, speaking by the prophet, had counselled them with the truest wisdom. “The people of Palestine, Judah, Edom, and Moab, dwelling beside the sea,” who “brought tribute and presents to Asshur my lord,” says Sargon in one place, “were speaking treason”²—but within the time named by Isaiah, their hopes, as we have seen, were crushed, in spite of any trifling help sent from Egypt.

It is to this period, apparently, that the chapter which

disclosed the annals in which the long and magnificent story of his reign is told.

¹ Zech. xiii. 4. John the Baptist, Matt. iii. 4. Sheepskins or goat-skin coats were worn in some cases. 2 Kings i. 8; Heb. xi. 37.

² Smith's *Assyrian Canon*, p. 130.

now opens the prophecies of Isaiah, must be referred. Patriot as well as seer, he grieves over the desolation of his country by the invaders who had lately swept through it; pleads with his people against the depravity of the times, and strives to rouse them to reformation, by a touching presentation of Jehovah's tenderness, and longing to forgive them and restore them to His favour.

"Hear, O ye heavens," says he,¹ "and give ear, O earth, for Jehovah speaks! 'I have nourished and brought up sons to manhood and greatness, but they have been untrue to me. The ox knows its owner; the ass its master's crib, but Israel has no knowledge; my people have no understanding.'

"Ah sinful race of guilt-laden men! a generation of evil doers! of unworthy sons! who have forsaken Jehovah, despised the Holy One of Israel, and broken loose from Him!

"Why² should ye be stricken any more through continuing your revolt against God? The whole³ head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no part sound. The body is all wounds and wales and festering sores, that have not been pressed out and cleansed, nor bound up nor softened with oil.

"Your land is a desolation; your cities are burned with fire; the foreign soldiery devour the fruits of your soil before your eyes; it is a waste such as only barbarians leave. And Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion, though saved from the foe, is left like a poor shed⁴ in a vineyard; like a frail hut in a garden of cucumbers; like a lone watch tower!⁵

¹ Isaiah i.

² Knobel, Diestel, Ewald, and the *Vulgata* have: "On what part."

³ *Delitsch*, *Naegelsbach*, *Cheyne*, have: "every."

⁴ In which the watchman sat while his crop was ripening, to protect it from birds, etc. Its loose boards and branches would speedily be the very image of ruin, when he had left it, after the vintage was gathered. The hut in the garden is a similar figure.

⁵ Ges., *Thes.* *Hitzig.* *Knobel.* *Diestel.*

"Had not Jehovah of Hosts spared a small remnant of us, we should have been swept away as utterly as Sodom; we should have perished from the earth like Gomorrah!"

"Hear the word of Jehovah, ye Princes of Sodom; ¹ give ear to the lesson of our God, ye people of Gomorrah!"

"What is the multitude of your sacrifices worth to Me?" says Jehovah. "I am satiated with the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. I have no pleasure in the blood of bullocks, or lambs, or he goats. When ye appear before me in the forecourts of the temple, who desires these sacrifices of beasts at your hands, ye who bring them as offerings?"

"Bring no more worthless meat offerings; their smoke is an abominable incense to me. As to your new moon services, and your sabbaths, and celebration of festivals,—iniquity and solemn assemblies in one,—I cannot endure them. My soul hates your new moons and feasts, they are a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread forth your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; pray ever so much, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood!"

"Wash you, make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of your deeds from before My eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek what is right. Restrain the oppressor. Do justice to the orphan. Plead the cause of the widow."

"Come, now, and let us settle our dispute together," says Jehovah. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson they shall be like wool."

"If ye willingly obey Me, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye resist and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword." Thus has the mouth of Jehovah spoken.

"How has the once faithful city become a harlot; she that was full of justice; in whom righteousness was counted to have its dwelling, but now murderers! Your silver has turned to dross! your wine is thinned with water. Your law-makers are law-breakers, and comrades of thieves; every one of them loves a bribe, and hunts after gifts. They keep back justice from the orphan, and the cause of the widow does not come before them!"

"Therefore, says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, the Mighty One

¹ Jerusalem.

of Israel: 'Ha! I will wreak My desire on My adversaries, and avenge Myself on My enemies, and turn My hand against you, smelting out your dross as with lye,¹ and I will take away all the alloy from the silver. Then I will make your judges as they were of old, and your counsellors as in early times, and, after I have done so, men will call you the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City.'

"Zion shall be saved through justice, and her reformed sons through righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall all be destroyed, and they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed! For ye ungodly will be ashamed of the terebinth groves where ye worshipped idols. Ye shall blush for the shady gardens you loved, where you committed sin. And on the day of God's judgments ye shall be like terebinths with blasted leaves, and as a waterless garden. The rich man shall be as tow, and his idol as a spark. They will both burn together and no one will quench them!

Whether the grand orations, of which this is one, were delivered, like our sermons, at stated times—perhaps the Sabbaths or feast days—or as occasion rose, cannot be known. But the lofty enthusiasm they reveal could hardly have been restricted to periodical outbursts. In his long coarse black mantle of sackcloth, with his feet bare, he must have been a familiar figure to every one in the narrow streets of the little mountain city which was the centre of his activity. It may have been in these days of sadness, when Sargon's campaigns were spreading desolation far and near, that some utterances preserved to us respecting Edom were uttered.

One striking fragment is ominously prefaced by the words: The burden of the land devoted to silent desolation.² It begins abruptly, as follows:

¹ *Az*, alkaline flux to make the metal melt sooner. Winer, art. *Lungensalz*. Borax is the flux commonly used in England.

² This is the meaning given in *Riehm* to "Dumah." Isa. xxi. 11, 12. The Assyrian name for Edom is Udumu.

"A voice," continues the prophet, "calls to me out of Seir—Watchman, what watch of the night is it? and, in its eager anxiety, repeats the cry, Watchman, what watch of the night is it? Is darkness soon to pass and joy return?"

But the watchman prophet replies:—

"The morning indeed comes, but so, alas! does the night; light and darkness are both in store for you. If you wish to inquire further from me, do so hereafter; come back to me when you desire."

Perhaps the exact future of Edom had not as yet been revealed to the seer.

At a later time he could speak more fully, and did so; treating Edom as the representative of the collective enemies of the kingdom of God, and prefacing its doom by a picture of the wrath of the Almighty on the world at large, at the end of all things, when the sins of the race shall have filled their measure.¹

"Draw near," said he,² "ye nations, to listen, and ye peoples, hearken! Let the whole earth give ear, and all that it contains—the world and all its populations."³

"For the indignation of Jehovah is kindled against all the heathen nations; His wrath against all their armies. He has laid them under His ban; He has devoted them to slaughter! Their slain shall be cast out, unburied; the stench of their corpses will fill the air,⁴ and the mountains will flow down⁵ with their blood. And all the army of heaven—the stars—shall also die and rot away, and the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll;⁶ their whole hosts of stars shall fall down from them, as a

¹ Matt. xxiv. 29. Isa. lxx. 17; lxxvi. 22.

² Isa. xxxiv. 1-17.

³ Lit. "that springs from it."

⁴ Lit. "go up."

⁵ Lit. "be melted," as if washed away.

⁶ A scroll—the written book of antiquity, which was fixed at each end to a round piece of wood, etc., and closed by rolling these together, towards the centre.

withered leaf falls from the vine, or the autumn leaves from the fig-tree!"

The awful prophetic vision of the final judgment of God on his enemies, now singles out the doom of Edom—the type of inveterate hostility to His kingdom.

"For my sword, borne back with Me to heaven, has already been bathed in the blood of My enemies here on earth; behold, it shall now light in judgment on Idumea, the people I have doomed! The sword of Jehovah drips¹ with blood; it is heavy with fat—with the blood of lambs and he-goats,² with the fat of the kidneys of rams;³ for Jehovah has a sacrifice in Bozrah;⁴ a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. The huge wild bulls,⁴ shall be struck down along with the lambs and goats—the bullocks with the steers.⁴ Their land will be soaked with their blood, and its dust manured with their fat.

"For Jehovah will have a day of vengeance and a year of retribution for the wrongs⁵ of Zion. The mountain torrents of Edom shall be turned into pitch;⁶ its very dust into brimstone;

¹ Lit. "is full of." The arrows of God are said, Dent. xxxii. 42, to be "drunk with blood," and the sword to have a "mouth." Gen. xxxiv. 26. Exod. xvii. 13, 26. Jer. xxi. 7. So also Virg., *Aeneid*, xi. 804.

² The people at large.

³ The present El Buseirah, containing about fifty huts or tents of Arabs, pitched amidst the ruins of a very large ancient town. It lies about twenty miles south-east of the foot of the Dead Sea, among the mountains of Edom, and was once the capital of the country. Amos i. 12. Isa. lxiii. 1. Jer. xlix. 13, 22. Bozrah means "The strong place." See art. by Prof. Mühlau, in *Riehm*.

⁴ The great men of the land. The "wild bull" is lit. the rimu or aurochs of the Assyrian inscriptions. The Heb. word is rem, plur. remim. Houghton, in *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. v. p. 368,

⁵ Lit. "quarrel," "cause."

⁶ Volcanic agencies are implied by such a figure. Sodom and Gomorrah lie near, and extinct craters with streams of ancient lava are close by. Ritter, vol. xiv. p. 1045; vol. xv. p. 769. Sulphur springs are also met with. The mountains of Edom are

its soil to burning pitch. It shall not be quenched day nor night; its smoke shall ascend for ever. It shall be waste from generation to generation. None shall pass through it for ever and ever.¹ But the pelican and the bittern² shall take possession of it; the eagle-owl³ and the raven will dwell in it, and God shall stretch out over it the measuring line of confusion, and the plummet⁴ of desolation.⁵ No nobles will be there who may claim the kingdom; all her princes shall be no more. And thorns shall spring up in its palaces; nettles and thistles in its castles; it shall be a habitation of jackals; a pasture for ostriches. And the howling wild creatures of the wastes shall meet the howling wolf, and the wood-spirit shall call to his fellow, and the night-spirit⁶ have her resting place there. The arrow-snake shall make its nest there, and lay her eggs, and hatch them, and gather her young under her shadow; there, also, shall the vultures assemble, one to another.

"Seek ye out from the Book of Jehovah, and read. Not one of these creatures shall be wanting; none of them shall lack its fellow. For the mouth of Jehovah has commanded; His Spirit has gathered them. He has thrown the lot for them, which part

vast masses of lava, with layers of sandstone which extend at their base.

¹ This passage must be taken as a highly wrought expression of utter desolation and solitude. There are not any active volcanoes in Edom, and even in Bozrah, as we have seen in Note 3, p. 406, there is still a village of Arabs.

² The *Sept.*, and, after it, most translators, render this "hedgehog;" but this creature never frequents marshy places such as the pelican chooses, while the bittern does. In *Rishm* it is supposed that the "springing snake," which leaps from trees, is intended. It is a small reptile, perhaps the one meant by flying serpent. Tristram is in favour of "bittern."

³ *Tristram*, p. 192. ⁴ *Diestel*, lit. "stones" used as plummets.

⁵ The two words are the same as in Gen. i. 2, Tohu and Bohu.

⁶ The word is "lilith." It corresponds to the Assyrian "lilit," the name of female demons who were fancied to kill children and even adults. The "satyrs" may be the "lil"—the male of these of imaginary beings. Lenormant, *La Magie*, pp. 30-36. (See p. 276.)

each shall inhabit, and His hand has divided it to them with the measuring line. They shall possess it for ever; they shall dwell in it from generation to generation!"¹

¹ The utter desolation of Edom in contrast to its ancient glory and wide population has excited the wonder of all travellers. Dean Stanley speaks of these as hard to realize from the present aspect of the country.* The ruined cities of Edom, says he, on the mountains east of the Arabah, and the remains and history of Edom itself, indicate a traffic and population which now seem to us almost inconceivable? "Edom, once given to Esau," says Stephens,† "as being of the fatness of the earth, but now a barren waste, a picture of death, an eternal monument of the wrath of God, and a fearful witness to the truth of the words spoken by His prophets, lay before me. The great caravan routes which ran through it in the days of David and Solomon and under the Roman empire are now completely broken up, and the great hadj routes to Mecca and Damascus lie along its borders, barely touching and not passing through it."‡ Petra was formerly the centre to which all the trade of Arabia converged, and Edom was wealthy by the profits thus realized, as well as by its sheep, etc., and the abundant fertility of its then well irrigated but now waterless soil. "Edom," says Burckhardt, "may with great propriety be called a stony desert, though susceptible of culture. In many places it is overgrown with wild herbs, but it must have been once thickly inhabited, for traces of many towns and villages are met with, . . . as well as many springs."§ "The country," says Dr. Olin, "is blighted with cheerless desolation and hopeless sterility. The hill sides and mountains, once covered with earth, and clothed with vineyards, are now bare rocks."|| Of the palaces of Petra, Lord Claud Hamilton writes: "The ground is strewn with portions of the roof, hewn stones, and portions of the cornice, amongst which numbers of *thistles, prickly plants, and nettles* grow. The common English blackthorn and bramble are very common in Petra, and a plant more prickly than either—the ordinary stinging nettle. The place, in fact, is full of brooms, thistles, nettles and thorns." "I was often reminded,"

* *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 28.

† *Stephens*, vol. ii. p. 35.

‡ *Olin's Travels*, vol. ii. pp. 15, 55.

† *Incidents of Travel*, vol. ii. p. 34.

§ *Travels*, p. 436.

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A year before Sargon's invasion of Arabia, Isaiah had startled the crowds of Jerusalem by predicting its occurrence and its result, and his prophetic words, then delivered, have happily been preserved.¹

Arab tribes of the south had frequently given trouble after the conquest of Samaria, invading its territory at their pleasure, and carrying off slaves and booty, to the terror, doubtless, of Judah; if indeed it, also, did not suffer. In the year 716, however, Sargon tells us, he sent an expedition into their distant retreats, and "subdued the uncultivated places of the remote Arabia, which had never before given tribute to Assyria," "bringing into subjection, among others, the Thamudites," still a well-known Arab tribe, which roamed anciently in the central districts of Arabia Petrea.² The fame of this striking campaign re-echoed in all lands and impelled distant princes to do homage to a monarch whose power

says Dr. Olin, "of the prediction of Isaiah, in the thirty-fourth chapter of his prophecies, by the multitude and noise of the wild fowls, each answering his mate." Scorpions abound, every stone seeming to hide them, and snakes are numerous. "The creeping things which are found in the ruins of Petra," says Dr. Wilson, "are so numerous, that the place like all others, I suppose, of a similar character in the country, may be characteristically spoken of as 'an habitation for dragons.'"^{*} "Among the birds which we noticed," he continues "are the eagle, the kite, the hawk, the great owl, the small owl, the raven, etc."† "I observed also," he adds, "some white vultures, which were generally seen in pairs, soaring above the valley or perched on the rock." The wild goat and wild boar, the hedgehog and porcupine, the fox, wolf, jackal, hyæna, lynx, leopard, hare, etc., are more or less common in Edom. The word "satyr" may mean goat—and if so, herds of goats further illustrate the prophecy. They are often met. Thus wonderfully have Isaiah's predictions been verified.

¹ Isaiah xxi. 13-17.

² Ptol., *Geograph.*, vi. 7.

^{*} *Lands of the Bible*, vol. i. p. 329

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 237.

was so far-reaching and resistless. To secure the friendship of the Great King,¹ tribute from the Pharaoh, from the king of the Sabæans in the south of Arabia, and from the "Queen of the Arabians," the locality of whose dominions is not accurately known, was sent humbly to Nineveh—that of the Arabs consisting of gold, spices,² horses, and camels. A number of Arab prisoners, also, were brought to the district of Samaria, forming thenceforward a permanent element in its population.³

The prediction opens abruptly, thus:—

"Ye shall seek shelter by night in the scraggy bush of the Arabian hills, not in the stations on the route, O ye caravans of Dedanites.⁴ Bring forth water to the thirsty fugitives, ye inhabitants of the land of Tema—dwelling between Palmyra and Petra—meet the escaped with the bread of welcome. For they have fled before the drawn sword, and the bent bow, and the fury of war! For thus hath Jehovah of Hosts said to me: In a year more, as the years of a hireling, all the glory of Kedar⁵ shall be gone, and the remnant of the mighty archers of the Kedarenes shall be small. Jehovah the God of Israel hath spoken it."

It must have been in these years also, apparently after Sargon had approached Jerusalem, and in the prophetic anticipation of future invasions, that the first great oracle directly launched against Assyria filled all minds with wondering interest.

"Woe to Assyria" cried Isaiah,⁶ speaking in high inspiration, as the mouthpiece of God,—*"Assyria, the rod of My anger, he*

¹ *Menant*, p. 182.

² Or, perfumes.

³ Neh. ii. 19; iv. 7. Edom and the other nations bordering on Palestine were crushed in the campaigns of 711-709, when compromised in the revolt of Ashdod.

⁴ Vol. i. p. 241, refers to another Dedan. This one was close to Edom. Knobel, *Völkertafel*, p. 267.

⁵ A general name in this place for the wandering tribes of Arabia.

⁶ Isaiah x. 5 to xii. 6.

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in whose hands is the staff of My indignation! I will send him against Judah, an impious nation, and give him a charge against a people who have incurred My wrath—to take the spoil, carry off the plunder, and tread them down like the mire of the streets—that they may in their trouble be led back to Me.

"But Assyria does not purpose to be merely My instrument, and his heart does not so intend: his thought is only to destroy and root up nation after nation, to extend his own glory. I, Jehovah, am no more to him than the idols of the heathen. For he says 'Are not my princes kings; do they not bear the title of kings; are they not, many of them, kings whom I have subdued; am not I, thence, called a king of kings—the Great King?' Is not Calno, in Babylonia,¹ utterly destroyed like Carohemish,² the great capital of the Hittite empire on the Euphrates? Has not Hamath, on the Orontes,³ fallen before me as Arpad, near Aleppo?⁴ Has not Samaria perished before my armies as Damascus did earlier? As my hand has reached these, the kingdoms of gods helpless to protect them against me—though their images were more in number than those of Samaria and Jerusalem⁵—can I not do to Jerusalem and her helpless gods⁶ as I have done to Samaria and hers?"⁷

¹ Isa. xxxvi. 4. Hos. v. 13; viii. 10. Ezek. xxvi. 7. Dan. ii. 37.

² Site unknown. So utterly had the city been destroyed that it is not mentioned in classical antiquity. See Schrader, art. *Calno*, in *Rehm*; also *Keilinschriften*, p. 250.

³ The site of this great commercial emporium of the Hittites was discovered by George Smith. It was at Hierapolis, on the Euphrates. See p. 375. The Maneh of Gargamis (Carohemish) was a standard of weight in Western Asia. The city rose again for a time as an Assyrian stronghold, after Sennacherib had overthrown Tyre.

⁴ Still an important town under the name of Hamath.

⁵ *Rehm*, art. *Arpad*.

⁶ Samaria and Jerusalem had gods, among whom Sargon reckons Jehovah, but not so many as other nations had; every village in a heathen country had its god.

⁷ Jehovah is classed with the "helpless gods" by the Assyrian king.

⁸ Images of Baal and Astarte, and also Asherahs, with the

"But, when Jehovah has finished all His work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem—then, says He, will I visit in wrath the proud acts of the king of Assyria's heart, and the boasting of his haughty looks. For he says, 'I have done all this by the strength of my own hand, and by my wisdom; for I am wise. I have swept away the boundaries of nations. I have plundered their treasures, and, like a god, cast down those that sat on thrones; and my hand has seized the riches of the nations as one plunders a nest. Like one who gathers the eggs in a forsaken nest, which has no parent birds to defend it, or move the wing, or open the bill, or cry in its behalf, so have I gathered all the earth, no one resisting me! All seemed as if left for me to take; the gods, their protectors, having fled!'

"Shall the axe thus boast against Him who hews with it? Shall the saw magnify itself against Him that wields it? Shall the rod bear itself as if it were not a mere piece of wood? Therefore shall the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, send leanness among the well nourished warriors of the Great King, and beneath his glory shall be kindled a burning like that of a flaming brand. The Light of Israel¹ shall Himself be the fire, the Holy One of Israel the flame, and shall kindle and devour the army of the Great King, like thorns and briars, in one day.² Jehovah shall consume his glory as the fire sweeps over both the forest and the garden ground. I shall destroy his glory, both soul and body; his whole empire shall perish; it shall pine away like a man mortally sick. And what are left of the trees of his forest shall be so few—his host shall so utterly vanish, that a child may write the names of the survivors.

"And it will come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel and those of the House of Jacob that have escaped, shall no longer lean upon him that smote them, but shall put themselves under the protection of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant of Jacob shall return, in heart, to the mighty God. For though Thy people, O Israel, were once like the sand of the

"calves," besides. The gods of Samaria are called here, "nothings" = "elilim": those of Jerusalem, Atzabim = "out" or "made things."

¹ Jehovah.

² Literally fulfilled in the fate of Sennacherib.

sea, only a remnant of them shall return. Destruction of most of them is determined, and that as a righteous punishment, sweeping through like a flood! For the Lord Jehovah of Hosts shall carry out a judicial destruction, through the whole land, as His firm decision.

"Therefore, thus says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, Fear not, My people, who dwell in Zion, because of Assyria, who smites thee with a rod, and lifts up his staff against thee, as the taskmasters once did in Egypt. For in a very little while My indignation against Judah will cease, and My anger shall be turned against the oppressor, to his destruction. For Jehovah will lift up a scourge to lash him, as he smote Midian at the rock of Oreb,¹ and as His rod was lifted up at the Red Sea, when he drowned the Egyptians in its depths. On that day the burden laid on your back by Assyria shall be taken off, and his yoke removed from your neck; and it will be finally cast away by you in your strength."²

The prophet now sees before him the Assyrian invasion, in inspired vision.

"He advances to Aiath, at the head of the pass from the Jordan,³ he advances by Migron—"the precipice;"—he stores up his baggage at Michmah; they go through the narrow defile; they make their camp at Geba; Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul flees!⁴ Shriek aloud O daughter of Gallim!⁵ Give ear, O Laishah;⁶ echo back her cry, O Anathoth!⁷ Madmenah⁸ flees;

¹ Judges vii. 25.

² Paraphrase embodying the sense. The metaphor is taken from an ox yoked to field work by its master.

³ They invade the country by the Wady Kelt and the Wady Suweinit. See vol. iii. p. 97.

⁴ This is the route directly south-east towards Jerusalem. Michmah is 1,990 feet above the sea. Aiath is probably Ai. Migron, "the precipice," is not yet identified.

⁵ —Springs. Unknown. Apparently, like the rest, in Benjamin.

⁶ Not Laish or Dan, in the far north, but some village of Benjamin, now vanished. Laishah—the lion.

⁷ —Answers (to prayer). An hour and a quarter N. of Jerusalem.

⁸ —A dunghill. Unknown.

the inhabitants of Gebim¹ save their goods by flight. He will rest a day at Nob² to prepare for the attack on Jerusalem. Thence will he shake his hand, vowing vengeance against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem!

"But, behold, the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, shall hew down the crown of his branches with a dreadful crash; the lordly warriors, the lofty trees of his forest-like army will be cut down; the haughty humbled; the rank and file—the undergrowth of that forest—shall Jehovah hew down with iron; the Lebanon-like wood of Assyria's array shall fall by One that is mighty."

Assyria thus ignominiously defeated, and Judah delivered, the prophet sees in the distance³ the coming of Him who shall restore the Theocracy to more than its ancient glory—the Messiah of God. It shows the feelings of the best of the people that the Messianic kingdom should thus constantly rise in the thoughts of Isaiah—their grandest representative.

"And there shall come forth a shoot from the decayed stock of Jesse, and a green sucker spring from its roots. The Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and power; the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. And the fear of Jehovah shall be the very breath of His life.⁴ And He shall not give decisions from mere outward appearances, or the rank or wealth of the suitor, nor give sentence from report, nor from the conflicting statements of opposite sides—for He has the spirit of knowledge and understanding to see truth at once. Therefore He will judge the helpless with righteousness, and give sentence with equity in favour of the suffering down-trodden in the land, but He will smite the tyrant⁵ with the rod of His mouth, and slay the ungodly with

¹ — The cisterns, or the locusts. Unknown.

² — A height. Fifty-five minutes N. of Jerusalem, in a pleasant valley.

³ Isaiah xi.

⁴ So, in effect, *Herder, Ewald, Naegelsbach.*

⁵ *Lagarde. Cheyna.*

the breath of His lips. Righteousness shall be the girdle of His waist, and faithfulness the girdle of His loins.¹

"And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fating together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall go together to the pastures; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat bruised² straw like the ox. And the child at the breast shall play beside the hole of the asp,³ and the weaned child shall stretch out his hand on the hole of the great yellow viper.⁴ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the bed of the sea.

"And on that day the Stem from the root of Jesse shall stand conspicuous from afar, as a banner to gather the people; the heathen also shall stream to Him, and the place where He makes His abode shall be glorious.⁵

"And it shall come to pass on that day that Jehovah shall stretch out His hand a second time—for He did it once before in Egypt—to redeem to Himself⁷ the remnant of His people which still survives—from Assyria, and from Lower Egypt, and from Upper Egypt, and from Ethiopia, and from Elam, east of the

¹ The words translated, "loins" and "reins," both mean the loins, or the part round which the girdle was worn—the seat of strength.

² The teben or broken and softened straw from the threshing floor. See pp. 361, 372, 390.

³ The pethen — apparently the deadly cobra, which is well known in Southern Palestine. It lurks in holes and walls of houses and fissures of the rocks. *Tristram*, p. 271.

⁴ Dr. Tristram (*N. H. of B.*, p. 275) saw one spring at a quail and miss its body, but the bird fluttered only a few yards and then fell dying. The viper had made a very small puncture in the flesh of one of its wings.

⁵ *Virg., Ecl.*, iv. 22; v. 30. *Horat., Epod.*, xvi. 30. *Romans* viii. 22.

⁶ By the concourse of nations to His "resting place," and by the righteousness of the judicial decisions given by Him there, to all.

⁷ *Lit.* "to buy back," so as to have them for His own again.

Tigris, and from Babylonia, and from Hamath on the north, and from the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean—lands to which they have been carried off as slaves.¹ For Jehovah will set up the Messiah as a rallying banner for the heathen, and He will gather together the dispersed children of Judah from the four sides of the earth. Then will the jealousy of Ephraim against Judah vanish, and those of Judah who would vex Ephraim shall be rooted out; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, nor Judah disquiet Ephraim.

"Instead of this, Ephraim and Judah, together, in loving alliance, shall go forth to new conquests. They shall pounce down on the shoulder² of the Philistines, towards the west, like eagles on their prey. They shall together spoil the sons of the East.³ Edom and Moab shall be the prey of their hand; the children of Ammon shall obey them.

"And Jehovah shall smite asunder the waters of the Nile mouths,⁴ to let the Hebrews return from Egypt again, dryshod, as they once did through the Red Sea; and He shall move His hand over the river Euphrates, and part it, by the glow of His breath, into seven channels, so that men shall go over in their sandals, and thus a path shall be opened from Assyria for the still surviving remnant of His people, like that made for Israel when it marched up out of the land of Egypt.

"In that day Judah shall say:⁵ 'I thank Thee, Jehovah, for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will henceforth trust in Him alone, not in man, and I shall not fear! For Jehovah Jah is my strength and my song; He has been my salvation!'

"Then, as, in the feast of Tabernacles, ye draw water for a drink-offering from the springs of Siloah, ye shall with joy draw blessing and favour from the salvation God has wrought for you, as from an exhaustless fountain. And ye shall say in that

¹ By Shishak, Pul, Sargon, and others, including the slave dealers of Edom, Philistia, and Tyre.

² This word may be also translated "border," or "hill."

³ The wandering Arab tribes, which so often invaded Palestine. Gen. xxix. 1. Judges vi. 3; vii. 12; viii. 10. 1 Kings iv. 80. Job i. 3.

⁴ *Diastel.*

⁵ Isaiah xii.

day—'Give thanks to Jehovah; sound aloud His name! Make known His great deeds to the nations; tell that His name is highly exalted! Sing with the harp to Jehovah, for mighty deeds hath He done: let them be known through the whole earth! Sing aloud, yea shout, thou daughter¹ of Zion; for great in thy midst is the Holy One of Israel.'"

¹ Inhabitrress.





CHAPTER XVI.

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS.

THE excitement caused by the Assyrian invasion¹ must have been intense, and the joy at the escape of the kingdom from destruction by Sargon unbounded, but it was speedily changed into renewed alarm at the serious illness of Hezekiah, who was still in the prime of his age, and as yet had no son to succeed him. A carbuncle or other inflammatory swelling,² brought on perhaps by the mental anxiety he had lately suffered, seemed likely to prove fatal. It was soon known in Jerusalem that Isaiah had been summoned to the royal sick chamber to tell the sufferer, by his prophetic foresight, what would be the result, and that he had announced to him from Jehovah that he must set his house in order and prepare for death. Universal consternation prevailed; nor was the grief of others more acute than that of Hezekiah himself. Clinging to life, and almost despairing of his country; uncheered moreover by the fulness of that hope vouchsafed by Him who has brought immortality to light through the Gospel;³

¹ 711 to 709.

² 2 Kings xx. 1 ff. Isa. xxxviii. 1 ff. Dr. Mead supposes it was a fever followed by an abscess.

³ 2 Tim. i. 10.

he turned his face from the light of day, which he was so soon to leave, to the blank wall, and "wept sore." That he had no heir to the throne, to reign after him, must have deepened his grief.¹ He had just passed through great trouble and had seemed about to enjoy a lengthened "rest," but, instead of this, the grave was opening before him. His tender nature shrank at the prospect, and he passionately appealed to God that he might yet be spared. "Remember now, O Jehovah," cried he, amidst his sobs, "how I have walked before Thee in truth, and with my whole heart, and have done what was good in Thy sight." Nor was his prayer unheard. The faithful Isaiah had scarcely left the sick-bed before the gloomy announcement just made was withdrawn. Before he reached the gate of the Middle Town, to go down to the Lower City,² an inspired intimation directed him to return and tell the king that his prayer was answered; that he would in three days be able to return thanks personally in the temple for his recovery; that fifteen years would be added to his life; and that, when the Assyrians, hereafter, should come again to seize Jerusalem, it would be divinely delivered. Simple means, blessed by God, were sufficient. The usual Eastern remedy of a poultice of figs, which is still used for the same purpose in Turkey and Persia,³ was laid on the tumour and gave instant relief. To cheer the sick man, a sign or divine pledge of his complete recovery was also vouchsafed. Ahaz had built a lofty sun-dial, in the Babylonian fashion, at once, perhaps, to serve in the worship of Baal and to measure time. It

¹ *Jos., Ant.*, X. ii. 1.

² *Delitzsch.*

³ *Morier. Farmer's Observ.*, vol. i. p. 389. Gesenius, *Iesaia*, p. 979. The Greeks and Romans also used figs in this way. *Celsius*, ii. 373.

may have been a lofty structure, on the ascending steps of which the shadow of the sun fell, in regular advance; or it may have been a horizontal disk on which minute steps or degrees were marked.¹ In either case the shadow was to go back ten of these grades. How this was brought about by God we are not told, but it is striking to find that a partial eclipse of the sun, visible at Jerusalem, took place on September 26th, 713, and that it would produce exactly such a phenomenon as Scripture records.²

To this illness of Hezekiah we are indebted for an interesting fragment of the literature of the time, throwing a striking light on the prevailing religious ideas. A psalm composed by the king, and doubtless sung

¹ *Thenius*.

² *Thenius*. Mr. Bosanquet says of an eclipse visible in Jerusalem on the 11th January, B.C. 689, that "it would have the effect of causing a shadow from the south, cast on a staircase, to recede to the extent described in the history, even ten steps, and that with a deliberate motion not to be mistaken, extending over twenty minutes." *Trans. of Bib. Arch.*, vol. iii. p. 36.

The twelve years of Merodach Baladan extended from B.C. 721 to 710—the 16th year of Hezekiah. Sargon, in his annals, accuses him of having sought foreign alliances,* and the mission to Jerusalem may have been an instance among others. Cheyne thinks the date of the royal sickness must have been about B.C. 713-712.† Schrader,‡ however, assigns it to about B.C. 704-3, just before Sennacherib's invasion, but there are no special reasons for his doing so. Strachey§ supposes it to have been a punishment for the want of faith in God, who, as he thinks, had recently delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrian. Hezekiah should not have lent an ear to overtures of alliance with heathen Babylon. But the earlier dates accord with historical fact and with the recorded solar eclipse of B.C. 713. The later, throw everything into confusion.

* *Records of the Past*, vol. vii. p. 41.

† *Isaiah*, vol. i. p. 195.

‡ *Keilinschriften*, p. 218.

§ *Hebrew Politics*, etc., pp. 295 ff.

amidst jubilant music, on his appearance in the temple to render public thanksgiving to God for his recovery, has come down to us.

"I said," it begins,¹ "in the quiet of my days, when my troubles are just over, and while my sun is still at midday,² I must enter the gates of the grave. I am made to come short, by divine wrath, of the due remainder of my years. I said—I shall no longer see Jehovah—no longer see Him in the land of the living! I shall no more look upon men, when I descend among the dwellers in the silent land."³

"The tent of my body is plucked up and borne from me, like the tent of a wandering shepherd when his encampment removes. My life is rolled up as a weaver rolls together his web. Jehovah is about to cut it off, as a rolled up web is cut off from the loom.⁴ To-day, or at latest before another morning, Thou wilt make an end of me! When night came I wore through it in pain, till the light, crying, 'I shall die before morning'—for it seemed, in my agony, as if Jehovah were breaking all my bones, as the lion crushes the bones of his prey. Like a swallow or a crane so did I keep twittering: I moaned like a dove: with eyes dim with tears I kept looking to heaven, as I cried, 'O Jehovah, I am sore pressed; death comes on me like a stern creditor who must be paid; Lord, satisfy him for me, and spare my life!'

"What shall I say? How shall I thank God, for He has not only promised through His prophet to restore me, but has fulfilled the promise! I shall enter Thy temple day by day, all my remaining years, to thank Thee with solemn gladness; for the recollection of the bitterness of my soul in these hours, now over, shall never leave me! O Lord, by such lowly remembrance of Thy goodness do men's spirits live; thus alone comes the true life of the soul. Since Thou seest that I feel this, Thou wilt perfectly restore me, and let me live.

"Behold, I suffered very bitterly, but God has turned it to good, for Thou hast in love delivered my soul from the nothingness of the grave. Thou didst cast all my sins behind Thy back,

¹ Isaiah xxxviii. 10 ff.
different renderings.

² He was about 40. I embody

³ Lit. "of ceasing."

⁴ Lit. "warp."

so that, not seeing them, Thou couldst save me from death, their desert.

"For the regions of the dead¹ cannot praise Thee; death cannot give Thee thanks. They that are gone into the grave cannot hope for a proof of Thy goodness, such as I have received. The living, the living, he only can praise Thee, as I do this day, having been saved from death! Henceforth, I will make known to my children the faithfulness God has shown to their father.

"Jehovah, indeed, is still ready to save me in days to come; therefore I and mine will sing psalms of thanksgiving all the days of our life, to the music of harps, in the house of Jehovah."

The news of Hezekiah's illness and wonderful recovery speedily reached even distant countries, and, among others, Babylonia. There, Merodach Baladan—"the son given by the god Merodach,"²—was still defiant, though Sargon had been fiercely trying to crush him for many years. Clutching, in his despair, at any hope, it seemed possible that Hezekiah, who had already given Sargon some trouble, might be disposed to form an alliance with Babylon, and thus in some measure weaken the strength of the great enemy. An embassy was therefore sent to Jerusalem³ with an autograph letter from Merodach Baladan, and the usual costly gifts with which Eastern monarchs always approach each other. The pretended object of the mission was to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery, but its real design was to form a treaty offensive and defensive with him. Such an honour to the king of a small country like Judah must have been very flattering, and was acknowledged by Hezekiah with every circumstance of Oriental courtesy. The strangers were shown all the sights of the kingdom, including, among others, the royal magazines, arsenal, and treasury.

¹ Sheol.

² Schrader. *Mühlau*.

³ In 711 or 710. 2 Kings xx. 12 ff. Isa. xxxix. 1 ff.

The whole military and fiscal arrangements of Judah, in fact, were opened to their inspection, as if to let them know that its support was worth their king's seeking.

To the simple and incautious Hezekiah such a disclosure of his secret resources before the ambassadors of a prince whose reign had been a constant and unsuccessful struggle against Sargon, his own great enemy, seemed innocent and harmless. But Isaiah, his faithful counsellor, knew better than his master. The sudden rise and fall of Oriental empires was often startling. Their provinces were always ready to throw off the yoke imposed on them only by resistless violence. The life of Sargon indeed had been spent in putting down revolts, from Media to Tyre, from Armenia to Arabia. Merodach Baladan's tenacity in resistance showed a vitality in his claims which might hereafter reverse the relations between him and Nineveh. Above all, prophetic insight corroborated natural prescience. It had been revealed to the seer that Babylon would one day be supreme, and that Judah would then suffer for the vanity of Hezekiah, by utter ruin. Ever fearless in his duties as the servant of God, this could not be withheld, though Hezekiah was at once his friend and his king. Once more the black mantle of the prophet was seen in the private chamber of the palace, and the monarch had to listen while his reprover told him, that he was sent from Jehovah to foretell the future destruction of the kingdom, by that very power whose representatives had thus received the royal confidence. The palace would be plundered; the national wealth seized; and his own descendants carried off to be servants in the palace of the king of Babylon. The blow was heavy, but it fell on a heart duly humble. "Good is the word of Jehovah," replied the king, "which thou hast spoken"—an answer

followed by the mitigating assurance that the catastrophe would not happen in his own days.

It is to this mission from Babylon that we owe perhaps the grandest chapters of the great prophet. Nineveh was the one mighty power in Western Asia. Vast regions trembled under its gigantic shadow. For more than a century to come it was to be the mistress of the world, for it only fell, before the Medes and Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar, between the years B.C. 609 and 606,¹ while the ruin of Babylon itself by the arms of Cyrus did not take place till the year B.C. 538. But what no man could have predicted was revealed to Isaiah.²

"Raise high a signal flag on an unwooded mountain," cried he in one of his orations,³ as if addressing his people, when already, to his prophetic vision, captives in Babylon; "lift it up, to guide the enemy to an attack on the great city. Cry aloud to them as

¹ Schrader in *Rishm*, art. *Nineve* and *Nebucadnesar*.

² I am aware of the theory of some scholars that the prophecy should be referred to some unknown author of a much later date than Isaiah. But the grounds on which this is proposed seem quite unsatisfactory, and rest, essentially, on a sceptical theory, that there is no such a thing in Scripture as prophecy, in the sense of prediction. The criticisms which would invalidate the claim of Isaiah to the authorship of the 13th and 14th chapters of his prophecies, are only such as ingenuity could easily invent with respect to any writing of an ancient author. Nor can the critics agree among themselves in their literary surgery. One is reminded of the heated and often wild controversy respecting Homer, raised by Wolf at the close of last century. For more than a generation the air was full of the dust raised by fierce disputants; but how completely has it now subsided, leaving the great Homeric poems to be regarded as essentially the work of their reputed author, with here and there a doubtful couplet; earlier materials having possibly been utilized in creating the splendid whole.

³ Isa. xiii.-xiv. 13.

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they come near; wave your hand to them in welcome; encourage them to burst through the gates of the Tyrants.¹

"I, Jehovah, have commanded my warriors, consecrated to the battle by sacrifices: I have summoned my Mighty Ones to execute my anger: my heroes, proudly rejoicing in the battle!

The prophet now hears the sounds of the gathering hosts.

"Hark! A noise in the mountains of Media,² as of a great people; hark! the mingled tumult of assembling kingdoms and nations!³ Jehovah of Hosts musters the legions of war! They come from a far country; from the end of the heavens;⁴ even Jehovah and the instruments of His indignation, to destroy the whole Babylonian empire!

"Howl, ye Babylonians, as the host approaches! For the day of Jehovah is near. It shall come with destroying violence from El Shaddai—the Almighty! All hands shall hang spiritless at the thought of it; every man's heart shall melt. They shall be dismayed; distress and anguish shall seize them, they shall groan as a woman in her labour; they shall stare one at another; their faces shall glow like flames with terror.

"Behold the day of Jehovah approaches; terrible in its fury and consuming wrath, to devastate the earth, and root out sinners from it.⁵ For the stars of heaven and its constellations⁶ shall

¹ The Medes and Persians were the assailants. The gates of the Tyrants were those of Babylon, the harsh lords of the captivity of Judah.

² Cyrus attacked Babylonia first from Media.

³ The Medes, Persians, Armenians, and Chaldeans. Xen., *Cyrop.*, iii. 3. Jer. li. 27.

⁴ Media—a very remote, unknown land, to the Jews—a land which seemed to be where the sky touches the earth.

⁵ Babylon had oppressed Judah, the people of God, and held the whole earth in its tyranny. They are, therefore, pre-eminently "sinners." Others, also, who had offended God would perish in the awful war.

⁶ The wandering Arab tribes, to which the Hebrews were allied, had early given names to the constellations which shone over

hide their light before the on-rushing storm; the sun shall be darkened at its rising, and the light of the moon, by night, will be shrouded. I will punish the world for its evil; the wicked for their iniquity; and I will put an end to the arrogance of the proud, and abase the haughtiness of the Tyrants! And so terrible will be the slaughter that I will make men scarcer than fine gold; scarcer than the golden bars of Ophir. I will shake the heavens, in carrying out these judgments, and the earth shall move, quaking, from its place, at the wrath of Jehovah of Hosts, and the day of His burning anger! Then shall they be like the hunted gazelle; like sheep with no one to gather them; the whole multitude of strangers of Babylon, shall flee like these; each man to his own people, and to his own land, as the Medes approach. Every one who has not fled, but is found still in Babylon when it is taken, will be thrust through; every one taken shall fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed to pieces against the stones before their eyes; their houses sacked, and their wives outraged.

"Behold, I shall stir up the Medes¹ against Babylon; a barbarous and cruel race which has not yet come to set value on silver, and has no pleasure in gold. Their bowmen² shall strike down the young men; they will have no compassion on the fruit of the womb; their eyes will have no pity even on children.

"Thus shall Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the pride and boast of the Chaldeans, be like Sodom and Gomorrah which God overthrew. It shall lie uninhabited for ever; undwelt in from generation to generation. Not even the wandering Arabs shall pitch their tents there, nor shall the shepherd tribes camp in it. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; the houses shall be

them in the wilderness pastures by night. One was the Ostrich, others, the Camel, the Tent, the Pitcher, and so on. See on this, very fully, Gesenius, *Iscia*, vol. i. pp. 457 ff.

¹ The Medes, only, are mentioned because they were the chief power till the time of Cyrus; the Persians being subordinate. The "Medes" may be understood as including the various Aryan nations of ancient Irân, or Persia, in its widest sense.

² The Medes and Persians were famous as bowmen. The bow was indeed their chief weapon. *Herod.*, vii. 61. *Strabo*, xi. 525. *Cyrop.*, ii. 1, 7. *Jer.* i. 42.

full of howling creatures,¹ and ostriches shall dwell there, and the goat-like demons of the wilds will dance there.² And wailing beasts shall howl by night in their palaces, where hitherto had been only joyous song; and jackals in the pleasant mansions. The time of Babylon is near; her days shall not be prolonged.

"For Jehovah³ will have mercy on the exiles of Jacob, and will again choose the banished Israel for Himself, as He did before, in Egypt, and plant them again in their own land. And the alien shall join himself to them, and build up their strength, and will attach himself to the House of Jacob as a proselyte. And they will take the Babylonians, and bring them with them to Palestine, and the House of Israel shall hold them, in Jehovah's land, for men slaves and women slaves; and they that were captives shall hold captive their former masters, and shall be lords over their former oppressors.

"And it shall come to pass in the day when Jehovah gives thee rest, O Judah, from thy sorrow, from thy distress, and from the hard bondage which they made thee endure, that thou shalt raise this song of triumph over the king of Babylon, and say—

"How has the Oppressor ceased to oppress! how is his raging stilled! Jehovah has broken the hard rule of the wicked, the sceptre of the tyrants, which fiercely, with blow upon blow, smote down the nations, and trampled under foot the peoples, with a rage that never ceased! The whole earth is now at rest and quiet; men break out into singing. Even the very cypresses and cedars of Lebanon rejoice at thy fall. 'Since thou hast been laid low,' say they, 'no feller comes up against us.'⁴ The kingdom of the dead, beneath, is in commotion, to meet thee at thy coming. It stirs up the shades on thy account; all the former mighty ones⁵ of the earth. It has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. They all stir themselves and say, 'Art thou also

¹ Jackals, wolves, owls, etc. ² See Luke xi. 24. See p. 19.

³ Isaiah xiv.

⁴ The Assyrian inscriptions often mention royal expeditions to hew down cypresses and cedars in Lebanon.

⁵ Lit., "goats of the earth,"—the leaders of the flock of men, who go before the people as the leader goes before the flock. Zech. x. 3. Ps. lxxviii. 30. Jer. l. 8.

become weak as we; art thou become like us, poor shades'! Thy pomp is cast down into the kingdom of the dead, and the murmur of thy harps; instead of thy tapestries and silken pillows, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee!

"How art thou fallen from heaven, thou shining star, Son of the Dawn! how art thou cast down from heaven and fallen to earth, who didst lay low the nations! Thou saidst in thy heart, 'I will be a god and will mount to heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars, where God dwells; I will sit down in the assembly of the gods on their sacred mountain, in the recesses of the north.¹ I will ascend to the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High!'

"Yet, now, thou art brought down to the kingdoms of the dead, to the deepest darkness of the grave! They that see thee, look narrowly and gaze earnestly at thee, saying, 'Is this the man that made the earth tremble, that made kingdoms quake; that made the world a wilderness, destroying its cities and leading off their populations; who released not his prisoners, to return to their homes!

"All the kings of the nations lie in honour, each in his own tomb. But thou art cast away far from thy burial place, like a worthless pruned branch; thy only winding sheet the bodies of those slain around thee in battle, pierced by the sword; among them thou liest, as a carcase trodden under foot. Thou shalt not be joined in burial with thy ancestors who have gone down to the strong bosom of the grave, because thou hast destroyed thy land by thy tyranny, and slain thy people by thy constant wars. The seed of evildoers shall for ever be without a name.'²

"Prepare ye a bath of blood for his sons, for the guilt of their fathers, that they may not rise up and conquer the lands, or fill the circle of the earth with ²ash oppressors! For I will rise against them, saith Jehovah or Hosts, and cut off from Babylon

¹ Orientals, in antiquity, imagined that the dwelling of the gods was in the extreme north, on a mountain reaching into the sky. This was called Meru by the people of India, and Albordj by the Persians. *Gesenius*, vol. ii. p. 316. *Lassen, Indische Alterthums-kunde*, vol. i. p. 34.

² End of the song.

all its population; their name and its inheritors; the branch and the twig, saith Jehovah! I will make it the possession of the bittern and swamps of water, and sweep it utterly away with the besom of destruction, saith Jehovah of Hosts."¹

Sargon's last triumph over Babylon took place in 710, and a satrap was appointed over it in 709. But the scope of this magnificent prophecy extended into the distant future; for the great rival of Nineveh again revolted at Sargon's death, and was destroyed by Sennacherib, in 691. Even then, however, Babylonia was not finally subdued, and it was not till the reign of Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son, that it was really incorporated into the Assyrian empire. Its subsequent rise, before the destruction of Nineveh, will be related hereafter.

Meanwhile, Isaiah, in his public utterances, frequently alluded to the mission from Merodach Baladan; if only to warn the king and people against any future alliance with heathen powers. Roused by the vision of all that his country would suffer at the hands of Babylon, he poured forth predictions of the ultimate fall of the oppressor, as if in this he might find some consolation. One of these orations, if we may so speak, bears the superscription of the Burden² of the Desert of the Sea; the Euphrates being often, like the Nile, spoken of thus; perhaps from its periodical overflow of the vast plains on its sides, which, but for its waters would be, as indeed they now are, a waste. Babylon, in fact, stood in the

¹ The utter desolation of the ruins of Babylon, the very site of which was unknown till our own day, is the best commentary on the literal exactness of this wonderful prophecy.

² The word "Massa," translated here "Burden," means primarily, a "lifting up," as of the voice, and hence should be rendered "prophecy," or "saying." It has a secondary meaning of "bearing," from burdens being "lifted up" before being carried. Hence it is often translated "a burden."

desert, though the great river turned as much of the plain as it was made to irrigate, into richly productive soil.

"As tempests from the south,¹ sweeping along, desolation come like a storm of war from the desert, the land of terrors. A gloomy vision is revealed to me! The plunderers spoil, and the wasters lay waste—wild and fierce enemies are coming up against Babylon! Go up against her, O Elam;² besiege her, O Media! The sighing she has caused by her tyranny will I make to cease! The vision of all that is to happen fills my loins with pain; the terrors of it have taken hold of me like the sorrows of a woman in labour; my senses fail me; I can neither hear nor see. My head beats wildly; terror has unmanned me; even the cool evening which I loved is a time of trembling!"

Babylon will be at ease, in fancied security; its nobles feasting and drinking, when the city is stormed.

"They are preparing the table; spreading the coverlets on the dining couches; they are eating and drinking. But while thus carousing the cry bursts in on them: 'Arise ye princes, anoint the shield.'⁴

"For thus hath Jehovah said to me: 'Go, set a watchman on the look-out tower. Let him tell you what he sees.'

"And he saw troops of horse, in pairs; troops of baggage asses; troops of baggage camels. And he set himself eagerly to note their number, their description, and the direction they were taking. Then he cried aloud, like a lion, 'O Lord I stand on the watch tower all the day I keep my place here through the night, and lo, there come troops of horse, in pairs.'⁵ Then He answered

¹ Storms from the south were the most terrible in Babylon. Isa. xxi. 1-10.

² See vol. i. p. 256.

³ See vol. i. p. 233. Media stretched nearly from the south end of the Caspian Sea to the farther slopes of the great mountain range which extends from Armenia, east of the Tigris, to the Gulf of Oman, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

⁴ Shields were greased or oiled before the battle, to make them shine and to toughen the leather.

⁵ The Persians were chiefly cavalry.

and said, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the images of her gods are cast, broken, to the ground.'¹

"O my banished children—ye exiles—threshed and trampled on by the tyrant, as corn is on the threshing floor—that which I have heard from Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, have I now declared to you."

After the defeat of Merodach Baladan in 710, Sargon remained for a time in Babylon. Great sacrifices to the gods; the reception of envoys from many kings, bearing their tribute; the planning and digging new canals of irrigation, to add to the glory of the city,² and much else, occupied him for some months, but he had to hurry off to fresh campaigns against Media and Elam.³ A splendid palace at Dur Sargina, now Khorsabad, near Nineveh, was meanwhile being built under his directions, as a quiet and magnificent retreat for his declining years. His pride in its grandeur is seen in the lengthened accounts given in the annals, of the precious woods used in its construction; its furniture of gold, silver, copper, and costly stones; the sculptured lions and bulls at the gates; and the lines of alabaster slabs ongraved with the story of his deeds, that adorned the walls of its countless rooms.⁴

But the avenger was at hand. He who had laid kingdoms waste was to be called to his account. The mighty palace was dedicated in 706, and in 705 Sargon lay on its floor, murdered.

Sennacherib,⁵ a younger son of the conqueror, presently occupied the vacant throne. Inferior in political ability to his father, he was not less ambitious, and spent his life

¹ The Persians abhorred idols.

² Menant, *Annales*, p. 173.

³ See vol. i. p. 256.

⁴ Menant, pp. 178-9.

⁵ Sen (the moon god) richly blesses the brothers. Schrader.

in military expeditions on the grandest scale. Renowned over the earth in his days as the great destroyer,¹ he knew no higher policy than force. Bringing only misery to the nations he conquered, they broke into constant revolt, as opportunity offered. Lust of power, cruelty, pride, and arrogance, the attributes of Oriental despots as a class, were developed in excess in his case.² All that is said by Isaiah, in his magnificent fourteenth chapter, of the king of Babylon, might be applied to Sennacherib. The splendour of the palace at Kouyunjik, by which he sought to eclipse that of his father at Khorsabad, its magnificent halls and entrances, its vast extent, occupying a quarter of Nineveh,³ are attested alike by his own boastful inscriptions, and by its far stretching ruins. Under him Assyria reached almost its highest glory.

The excitement that followed the murder of Sargon, as the news spread from land to land, created a wide harvest of troubles for the new king. Merodach Baladan at once drove away the Assyrian Viceroy, on Sargon's death, and Sennacherib had to spend his first year⁴ in a campaign against Babylon, which, in alliance with Elam, resisted him. Once more, however, the patriot Chaldean was defeated and had to flee, and Sennacherib entered his capital in triumph. A royal favourite, who had been brought up, as the inscription tell us, "like a little dog in the palace"⁵ of Sargon, was set over the province, to

¹ Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 118.

² Smith's *History of Assyria*, p. 126.

³ Layard, pp. 138, 147. Rawlinson; *Anct. Monarchies*, vol. ii. pp. 428, 466. Menant, p. 229. *Records of the Past*, vol. i. pp. 54 ff.

⁴ 705-4.

⁵ Schrader, art. *Sanherib*, in *Reichm.* The figure is one of endearment.

be overthrown again in three years by Merodach Bala-
dan, and Sennacherib, after subduing and devastating
Chaldæa, returned to Nineveh laden with spoil. Cam-
paigns against Elam and Media occupied the second and
third year; but in the fourth he was forced to turn his
armies once more to Syria. The long respite which it
had enjoyed since Sargon's invasion of 711 was at last
at an end.





CHAPTER XVII.

SENNACHERIB'S CAMPAIGN.

ROUSED by the death of Sargon to a new effort to drive back the Assyrians from their dangerous proximity to Egypt, and to escape the tribute now paid for a number of years, Seti, the reigning king of Tanis, and the minor Egyptian princes, in alliance with Tirhakah,¹ king of Ethiopia, reviving the policy of his predecessors, stirred up Palestine against Sennacherib by promising aid against him. The traditions of Egyptian greatness still acted like a spell on the neighbouring populations, and any venture, however desperate, seemed justifiable, that promised freedom from the hated oppression of Assyria. The kings of Phenicia and of the Philistine country, of the Orontes, Ammon, Moab, and Edom, were once more allies, refusing tribute and prepared to defend themselves, with the aid of Egypt and Tirhakah. Western Asia was all aflame, and the

¹ 2 Kings xix. 9. The inscriptions of Sennacherib mention the king of Meroë (Ethiopia) as the great Egyptian opponent of Assyria, and the name of the one reigning in the time of Assurbanipal, the grandson of Sennacherib, is given in the inscriptions as Tar-ku-u—the equivalent of our Tirhakah. It is easy to suppose that there may have been successive kings of the name.

Keilinschriften, p. 203.

rebellion, if not suppressed, might spread through the empire.

The crisis on the banks of the Tigris had given a respite to these revolted States in the west; but they had left it unimproved and had formed no plan of united action. It was not till B.C. 702-1 that the legions of Assyria were on their march towards Palestine—Sennacherib at their head. He entered the country, as usual, from the north. His long array of chariots, horsemen, and archers threaded the recesses of Lebanon, and scaled its heights. Its majestic cedars and cypresses, to use the language of the prophet, shrieked as they felt the fire at their roots and saw the fall of their companions,¹ levelled by the engineers of the invader to make machines of war, or mighty beams for the palaces of Nineveh. Where water was scarce, countless wells were dug, or those covered over by the enemy reopened.² Sennacherib boasted that with the sole of his foot he would dry up all the canals of Egypt, the ultimate object of his invasion. He would also, he declared, pitch his silken tent not only in the high passes of the north, but in Jerusalem itself, and profane its palace gardens, the luxurious retreats of Hezekiah's capital.³ The mountain torrents were bridged⁴ for the passage of his divisions; the rough wadys made practicable for his chariots. Descending by the gorge of the Dog River,⁵ he caused

¹ Zech. xi. 1.

² Winer, vol. i. p. 195.

³ 2 Kings xix. 23. *Thenius*. This seems a better rendering than "the highest caravanserai on Lebanon, and the garden woodland of Carmel." *Stanley*, and others. After crushing Egypt, he would turn against Jerusalem and humble it.

⁴ Isa. xxxvii. 24, 25. *Sept.*

⁵ *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 117. The stream formerly the Lycus, or Wolf River, is now called the Nahr el Kelb (Dog River). It rushes down from the mountains, clear as crystal, beneath over-

his figure to be carved on the rocks, by the side of that of Rameses II., who had passed the same way, a thousand years before, and had left a similar memento of his presence. At last the huge avalanche of war burst on the plains of Phenicia.

Sidon first felt its shock. Help was not at hand from Egypt. Elulams, the rebel king, had to flee to Cyprus,¹ or some other island of the Levant, and a more complaisant vassal—Ethobaal—was put in his place and bound to pay the wonted tribute. The chiefs or kings of Arvad and Gebal on the north; of Ashdod on the south; and of Ammon, Moab, and Edom, terrified at the presence of such a host, or, as the inscriptions say, "at the flash of the weapons of Asshur," Sennacherib's god, presently submitted, and renewed their homage, kissing the feet of the Great King, presenting rich gifts and engaging to pay tribute, on seeing Sidon fall without a blow. Zedek—"the first" chief of Askalon—stood out, but was punished by being dethroned in favour of a vassal king; his whole family, in all its branches, his god, and all his property, being carried off by the Assyrians. The towns of Beth-dagon, and Joppa, with two others whose names are unknown—all four, subject to Zedek—suffered bitterly for having supported him. Hezekiah, alone, now, withheld his submission. So far, the march towards Egypt had been a triumphal progress.

The excitement in Jerusalem at these events was intense. The city was put in a state of defence like that with which it had met Sargon's invasion ten years before. Hezekiah had again compromised himself. The Ekronites hanging rocks, a few miles north of Beirut, and about sixty north of Tyre Kiepert's *Map*.

¹ Sennacherib's annals, *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 37.

had dethroned their vassal-king Padiah, who had been faithful to Assyria, and having sent him in chains to Jerusalem, he had been detained there; the city hoping for speedy aid from Tirhakah. The troops of Seti and the local Egyptian kings, under that leader, their common head, marched to its relief, but Sennacherib posted himself between them and Jerusalem, and barred their passage at the Levitical town of Eltekeh,¹ in the ancient territory of Dan.

"The king of Egypt," say the annals, "and the soldiers, archers, chariots and horses of Ethiopia—countless in numbers—gathered together and came to the assistance" of the people of Ekron and of Hezekiah. "They placed their battle array before me in the plains of Eltekeh and discharged their arrows; but I fought and defeated them with the weapons of Asshur, my Lord. My hands captured, in the midst of the battle, the chief of the chariots, and the sons of the king of Egypt, and the chief of the chariots of the king of Ethiopia. I attacked, took, and plundered, the towns of Eltekeh and Timnah."²

Thus freed from fear of the Egyptian army, he turned against Ekron, which speedily fell. Padiah had been

¹ Josh. xix. 44; xxi. 23.

² *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 39.

³ In Judah. Josh. xv. 10. In the *Records of the Past* the word is incorrectly said to mean "the south," and its position is stated to have been near the south border of Palestine. It was, on the contrary, on the northern boundary of Judah, west from Jerusalem, and half way towards Ashdod. After a time it was assigned to Dan (Josh. xix. 43); but as a rule it was held by the Philistines. It is now Tibne—a heap of ruins. Rob., *Pal.*, vol. ii. p. 599. Guerin, *Judée*, vol. ii. p. 30. Eltekeh is supposed by Conder to be the present Beit Likia, a few miles north of Libnah, in the ancient territory of Dan.

sent by Hezekiah to the Assyrian camp, on the summons of Sennacherib to deliver him, and was restored to his throne, while those who had expelled him were treated with barbarous harshness.

"The chief priests and great men who committed these crimes," say the annals, "I put to death, and hung their bodies on stakes all round the city. I gave over to slavery the people of the town who had committed sins and crimes, but spared the rest."

Orders were now given to a corps of the army to march against Jerusalem, and presently the hill passes echoed to the tramp of the Assyrian infantry and the roll of their chariots. Fire and blood marked the progress of the invaders. Forty-six of Hezekiah's fenced cities were taken by storm, and numerous castles and villages, with a large amount of material of war. The whole population that could be captured were led off as slaves, to the number of 200,150 "small and great, male and female," with "horses, mares, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep beyond counting." Hezekiah, himself, awaited the bursting of the storm in Jerusalem. There, he was very soon closely blockaded, and preparations were begun for a regular siege.

"I shut him up," says Sennacherib, "like a bird, inside Jerusalem, his royal city, and constructed siege towers against him, for he had given command to renew the defences of the great gate of the city."

In this terrible crisis, as in the past, Isaiah, who was in the town, raised his voice fearlessly to calm the terrors of his fellow citizens and prevent universal panic and dismay. No danger appalled him. With the Assyrian before the walls, his confidence in Jehovah as the deliverer of His people never for a moment faltered.

"Jehovah of hosts has sworn," cried he; "'As I have devised

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so, surely, shall it come to pass; what I have purposed, that shall stand—to scatter to the winds the Assyrian in My land; to tread him under foot on My mountains! Then shall his yoke be lifted from off My people; his burden removed from their back.’

“This is the purpose which God has determined, not for Judah alone, but for the whole earth, now groaning under the tyrant. For this, it is, that the hand of Jehovah is stretched out over all the nations! Jehovah of Hosts hath decreed this and who shall annul it? His is the outstretched hand; who can turn it back?”¹

The scarlet cloaks and bright red shields of the Assyrians;² the strange dresses of the many foreign and barbarous contingents in the besieging force; their countless chariots; their standards, and their tents, as was remembered centuries after, covered the level space before the north gate, the slopes of the hills around, and the hollow of the neighbouring valleys.³ Deliverance seemed hopeless to some; others trusted to help from Tirhakah, in spite of his defeat. As usual in times of intense excitement, the most opposite passions and moods were displayed. Not a few indulged in the license of despair. Drunkenness and unrestrained debauchery rioted. Isaiah had lost control of the mass of the citizens, though some still listened to him with pale faces. The siege, nevertheless, continued, for Hezekiah would not surrender. Great bodies of men laboured at the defences, but famine advanced apace. In the midst of these terrors and the spreading demoralization, the voice of the prophet was once more heard.

¹ Isaiah xiv. 24–27.

² Nahum ii. 3.

³ Jos., *Bell.*, V. xii. 2. The hills facing Jerusalem on the north were known till the fall of the city as The Camp of the Assyrians.

"What¹ aileth thee now, O Jerusalem," cried he, shortly before the Assyrians appeared, "that all thine inhabitants have gone up to your flat housetops, looking out for the foe, watching the country people streaming towards the gates for protection, or vainly expecting the sight of help from Tirhakah! O city, full of stir, and noise, and mad joy! Thy men slain, as yet, have not fallen by the sword or in battle, but by hunger and pestilence, through overcrowding. Thy nobles, fleeing as a body from the bow of the Assyrian, whom they expect to see presently, are taken prisoner by their archers, the vanguard of the enemy;² all whom they find outside the gates, seeking to flee afar, are caught and put in chains.³

"For this, look no longer at me; let me weep bitterly. Do not press round, to comfort me amidst the ruin of Jerusalem, the daughter of my people! Jehovah of Hosts has sent us a day



HELMETS, AND STYLE OF WEARING THE HAIR AND BEARD IN THE AUSTRIAN ARMY.

of trouble, defeat, and dismay, in the Valley of Vision.⁴ They beleaguer the walls; the citizens cry for help to the hill of Zion where Jehovah dwells!

"The foot-soldiers from Elam have put on their quivers; a long drawn array of chariots and riders follows; the troops from Kir, the next land to Elam, have taken the leather covers of the march from their shields, to be ready for battle; the fairest valleys east, west, and south of Jerusalem are full of chariots, and cavalry posts are set in line over against the gates.

¹ Isa. xxii. 1-14.

² 2 Macc. ix. 11.

³ On the six-sided clay prism of Sennacherib he says of Jerusalem: "All who came outside the great gate of the city were captured and led off."

⁴ So called, perhaps, as the place where Isaiah and other prophets lived—perhaps where the school of the prophets was.

"Thus God discloses to Judah her weakness. The veil that has hidden her real condition is now drawn aside, and ye will examine the state of the arsenal of the House of the Forest.¹ Ye have already noted how many breaches there are in the walls of Mount Zion, the City of David,²—the highest and strongest of the whole defences. Ye have collected the waters of the Lower Pool, west of Zion: stopping its outflow, to store its supplies; and counted the houses of Jerusalem, breaking down those which might be used by the enemy; to heighten the walls with their material, and fill up the breaches. Ye have made a reservoir between the two walls for the waters of the Old Pool.³ But ye have not looked to Jehovah, the just source of all your adversity, nor regarded Him who, from afar, prepared this tribulation for you!

"Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, calls you on a day like this to weeping and mourning; to cut off your hair, and gird yourselves with sackcloth, in token of penitence. But, instead of this, behold, you give yourselves up to lightness and revelry, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep for feasting; eating flesh and drinking wine; saying, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' Some act thus in the recklessness of despair; some in mockery of the words of the prophets, trusting yet in their hearts that Egypt will deliver them!

"But Jehovah has revealed Himself in my ears, saying, Such iniquity shall never be forgiven till ye die, saith Jehovah of Hosts!"⁴

But resistance was ere long felt to be hopeless, and Hezekiah capitulated, agreeing to pay the penalty which Sennacherib might impose for his revolt. What it was the annals tell us.

"I cut off from his kingdom his cities which I plundered, and gave them to the kings of Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza. I diminished his kingdom. I raised the yearly gifts and tribute he was to pay to my majesty above the former scale. The fear-

¹ Built by Solomon—the House of the Forest of Lebanon. 1 Kings vii. 2; x. 17. Isa. xxxix. 2.

² The part of Jerusalem known by that name.

³ The steps taken in Sargon's time were repeated. See p. 377.

⁴ Isa. xxii. 14.

ful splendour of my majesty, had overwhelmed him. The workmen, soldiers, and masons whom he had collected for the fortification of Jerusalem, now carried tribute, which he sent after me to my royal city, Nineveh. It consisted of 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver;¹ woven cloth; scarlet, embroidered; precious stones of large size; couches of ivory; moveable thrones of ivory; skins of buffaloes; buffalo teeth; dan wood; ku wood; a great treasure of every kind; and his daughters, and the male and female inmates of his palace, with male slaves and female slaves. He sent also an envoy with the tribute and to do homage."²

A treaty having been made on these humiliating terms, the Assyrians withdrew to the Maritime Plain, where Sennacherib was now engaged in the siege of Lachish. Thither the heavy tribute exacted was first conveyed; Assyrian officials having raised the money by an impost on the citizens,³ and having duly weighed it when delivered. But to pay such an amount strained public and private resources to the utmost. The temple treasury and the palace exchequer were emptied, and the gold still left on the gates and door posts of the sanctuary stripped off.⁴

Jerusalem had submitted, but one place still held out. This was Lachish, a town of the kingdom of Judah, lying to the south, in the hills of the Negeb, not far from the frontiers of Egypt.⁵ Its position and strength

¹ Equal to 300 Jewish talents. 2 Kings xviii. 14. *Brandis*.

² *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 41. *Rishm*, p. 1360. *Menant*, p. 218. See Note, p. 477.

³ Isa. xxxiii. 18.

⁴ 2 Kings xviii. 1 ff. 2 Chron. xxxii. 1 ff. Isa. xxxvi. 1 ff.

⁵ Kiepert places it about 30 miles south-west of Jerusalem, as the crow flies. *Map*. Conder, however, thinks it the present Tel el Hesay, 8 miles west of Kiepert's site. If so, it lay on a hill about 500 feet above the sea and was 20 miles east of it and 18 miles east of Gaza, and overlooked the Maritime Plain from the last spur of the western slope of the Hebron hills.

had enabled it, so long ago as the time of Joshua, to withstand attack for two days, though other towns on all sides yielded at the first assault.¹ The original population had been Amorite highlanders,² and their love of independence seems to have passed to their successors. The town had been fortified by Rehoboam after the secession of the Ten Tribes,³ but appears to have escaped the fate which overtook most of his strongholds during the invasion of Shishak.

Thither Sennacherib had marched, "with all his power,"⁴ to conduct the siege in person. But he now learned that Seti, the king of Tanis in Egypt, had collected a new army against him, having recovered from his defeat at Eltekeh, and had secured fresh aid from Tirhakah, whose capital, Napata, was in Upper Egypt. This warlike king, moreover, he was informed, glad of the opportunity of coming forward in Egyptian affairs in the character of protector and suzerain, was advancing from the Upper Nile by forced marches, with all the troops of Ethiopia, against the Assyrians. It seemed as if Hezekiah's submission had been a mere cloak to secure time for the arrival of the Cushite monarch. Furious at being apparently thus overreached, Sennacherib at once sent back a flying corps to Jerusalem with three of the high officers of the palace, a Tartan, or general-in-chief, the Rabsaris, or chief of the eunuchs, and the Rabshakeh, or chief of the military staff.⁵

The reappearance of the Assyrians before Jerusalem filled the city with dismay, which was increased when

¹ Josh. x. 3, 5, 26, 31-33, 35.

² Josh. x. 6.

³ 2 Chron. xi. 9.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxxii. 9.

⁵ *Mulhau und Volk. The Assyrian title is Rabsak. See also Lenormant, Histoire Ancienne, vol. ii. p. 361. Schrader, p. 199.*

their demands were made known. The rumour of Tirhakah's approach; the fierce attack on Lachish; all the news of the war; had reached Jerusalem. The return of the Assyrian force may have been expected, through reports brought from the camp. The gates were once more shut, and the walls manned. In the crisis Isaiah again harangued the people in a succession of magnificent orations, of which the following seems to have been the earliest.

"Ah!¹ They are come at last! The hum of troops from many nations, murmuring like the waves of seas. Hark! the tumult as if of whole nations, like the tumult of mighty waters!

"The roar of the nations under the banners of Assyria is like the roaring of many waters; but at the rebuke of Jehovah they will presently flee afar; chased by the storm of His indignation, as the chaff flies over the mountains before the wind, from the threshing-floors on the hilltops,² and like the whirling dust before the hurricane.

"Terror shall seize us at the evening tide when they come, but before morning they will have fled! This is the portion of them that spoil us; the lot of them who plunder us!"

The prophet now addresses Egypt—under Tirhakah—the great enemy of Assyria.

"O Land of the buzz of fly-swarms³—emblem of countless armies—by the rivers of Ethiopia, which art sending messengers upon the seas, and in swift, light, papyrus boats⁴ along all your waters, to gather allies, and muster all the force of your empire:

"Go back to your homes, ye swift messengers—go back to Ethiopia—the tall and strong race, terrible in war from their rise

¹ Isa. xvii. 12-14; xviii. 1-7.

² *Herzog*, vol. iii. p. 504.

³ *Delitzsch*. Stinging flies are thought of. Knobel renders the word, "When the shadow falls both ways," but this is doubtful.

⁴ Job ix. 26.

till now,—the nation very strong and all subduing,¹ whose land is seamed with rivers! Jehovah, alone, will destroy the invader!

"All ye inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth, when the signal of the approach of the enemy is lifted up on the mountains, take notice; when the alarm trumpet is blown, give ear!

"For thus hath Jehovah said to me: 'I will take My rest while the Assyrians advance; I will keep My eyes on them through the whole summer, while the unclouded sunshine ripens the herbs, and the night mists temper the heat of harvest. But, before the vintage, when the flowering is over and the blossom is swelling into a ripe grape, I will² lop off the branches with pruning knives, and cut down and clear away the shoots. They shall, together, be left to the vultures and kites of the mountains, and to the wild beasts of the land; the birds shall summer on them, and the wild beasts shall winter on them.

"In that day will gifts of homage be brought to Jehovah of Hosts from the tall and strong nation; the people terrible in war, from their rise; the nation very strong and all-subduing, whose land is seamed with rivers—to the place where the name of Jehovah of Hosts is honoured—Mount Zion."

Meanwhile the commissioners from Sennacherib took measures to carry out their master's commands. Hezekiah had already submitted on the display of force, and he might do so again. Advancing to the walls, therefore, they demanded a parley, which, of course, was at once granted. Strangely enough, they took their stand by the conduit of the Upper Pool, on the highway running past the Fuller's Field, the very spot where, not far from the walls, Ahaz had had his interview with Isaiah.³ On

¹ The Ethiopians, under Tirhakah, afterwards subdued Egypt, extending their conquests even to the Pillars of Hercules. They were renowned in antiquity as one of the most ancient races, mighty in war and never subdued—*Diod.* iii. 2; *Pliny, H. N.*, vi. 35—and Tirhakah was ranked, as a conqueror, with Sesostris and Nebuchadnezzar. *Strabo*, xv. 686.

² In the Hebrew it is "he," but Jehovah is referred to.

³ *Isa.* vii. 3. See p. 307.

Hezekiah's side, Eliakim, now prefect of the palace in the place of Shebna,¹ and that dignitary himself, acting as royal scribe, and one Joah, the royal remembrancer and annalist, went to the nearest part of the wall² to hear the overtures of the Assyrians. Hezekiah, himself, declined to appear, as beneath his kingly dignity.

The Rabshakeh, or chief of the staff, had been chosen as speaker³ for Sennacherib. Since Hezekiah had not thought fit to come personally, his ministers were to tell their master, whom the speaker did not honour by the royal title, that it was clear he had secret relations with some outside power, else he never would have ventured thus to defy the Great King. What did such confidence mean? On whom did he trust in resisting Sennacherib and refusing to surrender Jerusalem? It was only idle talk to say that he trusted to his own abilities and resources. In all probability the Hebrew ambassadors had been asked at Lachish respecting Hezekiah's allies, and had discreetly refrained from mentioning Egypt. Their silence was now treated as a virtual confession, and the Rabshakeh proceeded to ask in direct terms, to whom Hezekiah really looked, that he should thus have rebelled against so mighty a king.⁴ Then, without waiting for an answer he went on—

"I know the whole truth, you have trusted in Egypt;⁵ you have taken it for the staff on which to lean; a poor broken reed, which can give no support, but will shiver under the weight of your hand, and pierce it. Perhaps, however," he continued, "you will tell me you trust in Jehovah, your God. But how can you hope that He will deliver you, when Hezekiah has insulted Him

¹ Isa. xxii. 20.

² Isa. xxxvi. 11.

³ Isa. xxvi. 4.

⁴ Judah had been tributary to Assyria since the days of Ahas.

⁵ Isa. xxix. 15-xxx. 1 ff.

by taking away His high places and His altars¹ in Judah and Jerusalem, and by setting up one altar before which alone the people are to worship?

"Fight the Great King! Well then, supposing you try issues with him? I am willing to help you. If you can find 2,000 men fit for cavalry service in Jerusalem, I shall give you 2,000 horses for them. But, even then, how could you hope to repel the force of a single subordinate officer of the king, my master! It is idle to speak of your acting on your own strength. Such a petty kingdom must look to foreign aid. This is why you trust in Egypt for chariots and cavalry!

"More than that. You talk of looking to Jehovah for help. Do you think that Sennacherib has come up against this land, to destroy it, without a commission from Jehovah to do so? No, indeed. Our spies have told us the words of your prophets—how Jehovah said to the Great King, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.' So much for your hope of deliverance from your God!"

The keenness of these words lay in their truth. Spoken aloud from beyond the wall, they were heard by the crowd, which stood near enough to the ministers on the parapet to catch all that was said. Feeling the danger of a panic or a revolt in the city, as the words of the Assyrian spread, Hezekiah's representatives, simply enough, begged the Rabshakeh to speak Aramaic or Syriac² rather than Hebrew,³ in which the high official of Sennacherib could converse fluently, as the members of our own government speak other languages besides English.

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 4. 2 Chron. xxxi. 1.

² Isa. xxxvi. 7.

³ The Aramaic was the great commercial language of Syria, Palestine, and Western Asia, and ultimately supplanted Hebrew among the Jews themselves. Private contract tables in Assyrian and Aramaic have been found at Nineveh.

⁴ The phrase "the Jews' language," Isa. xxxvi. 11, has apparently been substituted for the Hebrew language by some later reviser of the sacred text. It is an expression of more recent date.

But the Assyrian was not the man to give such an advantage to his opponents.

"Speak in Aramaic!" said he; "do you think I am sent to speak to you, then, or to your master? No, I am sent to these men, the defenders of the wall, to tell them the misery they will endure if they continue to resist the Great King; and of course I shall use their language."

Then lifting his voice, and speaking at his loudest in Hebrew, he addressed the citizens and soldiers within farthest hearing:

"Listen, all of you, to the words of the Great King, the king of Assyria! He bids me tell you not to let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you. And don't let him induce you to trust in Jehovah for deliverance. Pay no attention to what he says, but give heed to the offers of my master, the Great King. 'Make peace with me,' says he, 'and come out to me, and give up your city into my hands, and then you shall live peaceably on your own land, every man eating the fruit of his own vine and fig-tree, and drinking the water of his own cistern, till I come, after the war with Egypt is over, and take you away to another land like your own, a land of corn and wine, of bread and vineyards,¹ of generous olive trees and of honey.' Listen to these words of the Great King, that ye may live and not die, and hearken not to Hezekiah.²

"Beware lest Hezekiah move you to further resistance by saying 'Jehovah will deliver us.' Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hands of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, in the north, or of Sepharvaim, in Mesopotamia? And did the gods of Samaria deliver that city out of my hands? And if all these gods were helpless against the gods of my master, how much less will Jehovah, the weak God of a weak people, be able to resist him!"

This fierce and blasphemous boasting was received in profound silence, Hezekiah having wisely forbidden a word of reply, lest it might provoke the Assyrians to

¹ Isa. xxxvi. 17.

² 2 Kings xviii. 32.

fiercer hostility; perhaps to an instant attempt to storm the city. The parley having ended, the Assyrians rode back to their camp.

The three ministers of Hezekiah, greatly distressed by the tone and demands of the enemy, now made their way to the palace, their clothes rent, and they and the people filling the air with lamentation.¹ The news appalled the king. Rending his robes in bitterness of soul, he forthwith put on sackcloth, in token of grief, and like the good man he was, went straight to the temple, to lay his case before God. The whole court, also, assumed coarse black mantles of sackcloth,² and Eliakim and Shebna, with the senior priests, in these robes of mourning, were sent to tell Isaiah what had happened.

"This is a day of trouble,"³ said they to him, in the name of Hezekiah, "a day of trouble and of rebuke from God, and of blasphemy from the heathen. The city is in the most critical and desperate state, and has no power to help itself. It may be that Jehovah, thy God, will note the blasphemous words of the Rabshakeh, whom the Great King, his master, has sent to insult the Living God, and will deal punishment on him for them, and may the king ask that you lift up your prayer for those of us that are left?"

The reply of Isaiah was sublime.

"Tell your master," he replied "that Jehovah commands him not to fear the blasphemous words he has heard from these slaves of the king of Assyria. 'Behold' says Jehovah, 'I will put such a spirit in him that on his hearing the rumour of the approach of Tirhakah, he shall retreat to his own country, and there I will cause him to fall by the sword.'"⁴

¹ Isa. xxxvi. 22. ² i.e. Cloth for sacking. ³ Isa. xxxvii. 3-7.

⁴ Lit. "young men," a contemptuous phrase.

⁵ This was spoken in 701. Sennacherib was murdered in Assyria, by his sons, in 682, nineteen years later.

Encouraged by such an assurance, Hezekiah forthwith sent back his answer to the Assyrians, refusing under any circumstances to deliver up the city, and the Rabshakeh had to return with this irritating news to Libnah, on which Sennacherib had now fallen back, in alarm at the approach of Tirhakah.¹

During these days or weeks of intense excitement and anxiety, Isaiah was fearless and defiant as ever. Hezekiah and his people heard his voice again and again, rousing them to trust in Jehovah even in this darkest hour. An oration, apparently of this date, has come down to us.

"Woe,"² cried the great patriot prophet, "Woe to thee thou Spoiler of Nations, though thyself unspoiled; thou that showest violence when no violence has been shown to thee! Wherefore invadest thou Judah, which has not wronged thee? When thou hast ended thy permitted work as a spoiler, thou thyself shalt be spoiled! When thou hast finished the violence thou art allowed to show, violence will be meted out to thyself!

"O Jehovah! be gracious unto us; in Thee do we trust. Be Thou the Arm of Thy people each morning, to protect and help through the day. Be Thou our salvation in this time of trouble!

"At the voice of the thunder that heralds Thy approach the many peoples of the Assyrian army flee! When Thou liftest up Thyself against them, their nations are scattered! The spoil of your host, O peoples, will be carried off by us, as locusts strip the spoil of the field; as they spread swiftly over the ground in countless numbers, so shall the inhabitants of Jerusalem rush out to the booty.

"Jehovah is exalted as the Victor, for He sits throned in the heavens, Lord of all; the Great God before whom all must yield! He is the Holy God, for He has filled Zion with justice by His judgments; righteousness, by His faithfulness to His promises. Wisdom and knowledge, to feel and act on this, will be the security of thy times, O Judah, against future attacks of thine

¹ Isa. xxxvii. 8.

² Isa. xxxiii. 1-24.

enemies; they will be to thee a fountain¹ of safety. The fear of Jehovah is the great treasure of man!

Some time before the return of the Assyrians, Hezekiah had sought to deprecate the wrath of Sennacherib, of which terrible rumours had reached him from Lachish. For this end he had sent ambassadors, in the hope that they might possibly convince the Great King that no treachery was intended, and save the country from a second invasion, or possibly even obtain favourable terms for Lachish itself.



Jews imploring mercy from Sennacherib, at Lachish. From the Sculptures.

The embassy had found him at that city, which was soon after taken by storm and delivered to the tender mercies of the soldiery.² A slab from his palace at Nineveh, now in the British Museum, shows him in state "receiving the plunder of the town of Lachish." He sits on a throne before his tent; two arrows in one

¹ Lit. "treasure" or "wealth."

² "I give permission for its slaughter." Words of Sennacherib on the great tablet of the siege of Lachish. Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, pp. 149-152.

hand and his bow in the other, while prisoners are being brought before him; an officer, attended by a guard, stating the facts respecting them. Two eunuchs stand with feather flaps to wave over him, for coolness and to keep away the flies. Two horses, ready for his use, are behind; soldiers with tall lances attending them. The front rank of prisoners before him kneel, to implore mercy, and behind them is a long file of their unfortunate companions. Some whose fate has already been decided have been led a short way off and killed; others may be spared, as slaves. A chariot with two horses stands near—perhaps that of Sennacherib; and numerous fruit trees over the whole slab show the fruitfulness of the country. A strong force of horse and foot, on the right of the picture, guards the king.

Hezekiah's mission found no success. It was of the greatest importance to Sennacherib that he should obtain possession of Jerusalem, to support and protect his rear, and he therefore dismissed the ambassadors without deigning to listen to their entreaties. To this Isaiah refers in the next words of his oration—

"The lion-like ones sent to Lachish, to Sennacherib, as suppliants for peace, return crushed by the hard conditions, and weep without the gates as they approach; the messengers of peace weep bitterly. The roads lie desolate; travel on them has ceased. Sennacherib has broken the treaty; he uses our cities shamefully; he regards no man. The whole land mourns and languishes. Lebanon stands ashamed and withers away; the rich sea-coast plains are like a desert; Bashan and Carmel are bare!

"Now will I arise, saith Jehovah! Now will I stand forth; now will I lift myself up! Your designs against Judah are idle, O Assyria. Ye conceive withered grass; ye bring forth stubble—both, the light fuel of the oven! Your own flaming breath—the breath of your raging fury against the nations, shall consume you! The peoples under your banners will be burnt up and

reduced to dust, like lime—They shall be like the cuttings of thorn bushes that are burnt in the fire.¹

"Hear, ye nations that are far off, what I have thus done; ye that are near and have seen it, acknowledge My might! The transgressors in Zion itself tremble lest judgment be let loose on them also, as well as the Assyrians: terror has seized the ungodly. 'Oh, who,' cry they, in their guilty fears, 'can escape' from this devouring fire of God's wrath? Who can escape from the undying flames of His judgments?' He, let me answer, that walks in righteousness and is upright in his words; who warns off attempts at bribery and keeps his hands clean from it; who stops his ears and will not listen to schemes of murder or violence; who closes his eyes from sharing in evil. Such a man shall dwell high above danger; he will be safe from the judgments around, as in an unassailable fortress of the rocks; his bread will be given him; his water shall not fail.

"Yet these judgments will pass away! Thine eyes, O Jerusalem, shall once more see the king in his beauty, arrayed in his splendour, and no longer humbled and clad in sackcloth as now;² and behold the land, far and near, freed from the enemy, and restored to Judah! Thy heart shall think of the past terror. Where is now the Assyrian who assessed the tribute; where is he who weighed it when handed over? Where is the leader of the besieging force, who counted the towers of Jerusalem, to storm them? They have fled! Thou shalt no longer see the barbarous people, the people of dark unintelligible speech, whose stammering words one could not understand.⁴

"Thou shalt surely, O Jehovah, look on Zion, the city where we assemble to our religious feasts; Thine eyes shall look down on Jerusalem as our peaceful home—a tent that will not wander; whose pins shall never be pulled up; whose cords shall never be rent away.⁵ For there Jehovah is our defender, instead of

¹ The burning of corpses was hateful to the Hebrews.

² *Ewald*, "who can protect us from!"

³ Isa. xxxvii. 1. 2 Kings vi. 30.

⁴ Though allied to Hebrew, the Assyrian language was unintelligible to the people of Palestine.

⁵ No longer in dread of conquest or deportation; not like a tent that is taken down and carried off, but fixed and permanent.



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the broad rivers and moats that protect other cities. Jehovah Himself will be to us a wide girdle of waters which no war-galley with its banks of oars will enter, and which no mighty war-ship shall attempt to pass over. For Jehovah is our judge; Jehovah our commander; Jehovah our King! He will save us!

"Thy ropes hang slack, O Zion, now the enemy is on thee! they will not hold up the mast, nor keep upright a flag staff on which thy pennon may spread out. But when Assyria flees, then shall the spoil of a mighty booty be divided; even the lame will be able to seize a share! The miseries of the past will be forgotten. The inhabitants shall say no more, 'I am sick;' the people that dwell there shall be forgiven all the iniquity of the past."¹

His first attempt to get possession of Jerusalem having failed, Sennacherib determined on another effort to secure it without being compelled to undertake a siege. Disguising his real feelings, he stooped to dictate a letter to Hezekiah, and with this he sent back the Rabshakeh, to make a second attempt to terrify the king into surrender. To take his city by a tedious formal investment would require too much time. Recounting, like his spokesman at the first parley, a long list of cities and countries² whose gods had been unable to protect them against his arms, and boasting of his deeds in all lands, how he had utterly destroyed them, the letter of Sennacherib warned Hezekiah not to let Jehovah deceive him by a false promise of deliverance.

This renewed attempt of the enemy to wrest Jerusalem from his hands having been duly read by the king, he once more betook himself, with a touching piety, to the temple, to spread it before Jehovah, as if to stir up His wrath at its blasphemies by laying them, as it were, before His eyes, and to implore His protection.³

¹ Isaiah xxxiii. 7-24.

² Gozan, Harran, Rezeph, and Telessar were in Mesopotamia. Some other places are not known.

³ Antiquity was, in its way, very religious. A striking parallel

His prayer was alike touching and sublime.

"O Jehovah of Hosts," it runs; "the God of Israel, who art enthroned upon the cherubim! Thou alone art the true God of all the kingdoms of the earth, for Thou hast made both heaven and earth. Incline Thine ear to me, O Lord, and hear my prayer; open Thine eyes and look, and read the blasphemies of this letter against Thee, the living God. Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have burnt their gods and have destroyed them; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands—wood and stone. Now, therefore, O Jehovah our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou alone art the one living God, Jehovah.¹

He had appealed to a God who hears prayer² and never forsakes the righteous when they call on Him in the day of trouble.³ Forthwith Isaiah received a fresh prophetic intimation, which he was commissioned to communicate at once to Hezekiah. Hastening therefore to the palace, the undaunted patriot seer cheered and

for example, to Hezekiah's act, is told of Assurbanipal. On receiving a message that a powerful enemy was determined to fight him, he went into the temple of Ishtar, and, approaching the goddess, wept before her, and reminded her of his good deeds in restoring her temples; professed that he loved her courts; contrasted the conduct of his enemy—the violent man, hater of the gods—with his own; related all her titles and glories, told how his foe gathered an army against him, and wound up by imploring her to hurl him down like a stone in the day of battle, and sweep him away like a storm and an evil wind. He relates how the goddess heard his prayer, telling him not to fear, and how, on the same night, a seer, while he slept, had a vision in which the goddess appeared to him surrounded with glory, and holding a bow in her hand, ready equipped for war. She sent the king an encouraging message, telling him to eat food and drink wine, and engage in festivities, for she would give him the victory. Smith's *Assyria*, pp. 156-7.

¹ Isa. xxxvii. 16-20.

² Ps. lxxv. 2.

³ Ps. l. 15.

confirmed the courage of the king in words which still move the heart as we read them.

"Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel," he began; "'I have heard thy prayer concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria.' This is the word Jehovah has spoken against him.

"The virgin daughter of Sion despises and mocks at thee; the daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head at thee! Whom hast thou affected to despise? Whom hast thou dared to blaspheme? Against whom hast thou raised thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel!

"By the mouth of thy servants thou hast affected to despise Jehovah, saying: 'With the multitude of my chariots have I ascended the heights of the mountains, to the very recesses of Lebanon, and have hewn down its tallest cedars and its choicest cypresses, and I will press on to its farthest height;¹ its garden-like woodland.² Where water was scarce I dug wells for my army and have drunk in abundance; the arms and canals of the Nile will be dried up under the tread of my countless host, and will not hinder my entrance to Egypt.

"All this, thy boasting, is vain folly, for thou hast done nothing of thine own might, but only as the appointed instrument of Jehovah. Hast thou not heard by thy spies and by common report, through My prophets, that it was I, long ago, from the days of old, who determined and planned all that has happened, and that in laying waste the strong cities of Judah as thou hast done, and turning them into heaps of ruins, thou hast only been carrying out My will? It was only because I had given them up to thee that their citizens were weak, dismayed, and helpless; that they were before the flames of thy rage like the grass of the field, or the young herbs, or the grass on the roof tops, or the springing corn, before the scorching sun or the glowing hot wind.

¹ Isaiah xxxvii. 21-35.

² Other conquerors have boasted much in the same way. Alaric marching on Rome says: "We have seen the mountains sink; the rivers dry up before us."

³ This may, as already noticed, mean Mount Zion, and the royal pleasure grounds of Jerusalem. In 2 Kings xix. 23, the phrase is "lodging-place," or "caravanseraï" instead of "height."

"But to show thee how worthless are thy boasts and thy blasphemies; I have all along known thy abode in Assyria, before thy marching out from it, thy starting against Judah, thy invasion of the land, and thy rage against Me! And now, because thy fury oversteps the limits I have allowed thee; because thy rage against Me, and thy insolent boasting, have come up into My ears, I will put My ring in thy nose, and My bridle into thy jaws, as men do with a furious wild beast, and will turn thee back to Assyria by the way thou camest, with thy object unaccomplished!

"And this shall be the sign to thee, O Judah, that I shall do this! This year ye shall eat what is self-grown from the last crop; the next ye shall have only what springs from the old roots, but the third year ye shall sow, and reap, and plant fresh vineyards and eat of their fruit. And the remnant of the House of Judah, that has escaped from the Assyrian, shall again strike root downward and bear fruit upward. For a remnant shall go forth from Jerusalem, and those who escape shall go forth from mount Zion, to re-people the land.

"Therefore, thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria. He shall not come into this city, Jerusalem, nor shoot an arrow into it; nor bring the shield of his troops against it; nor cast up an earthen wall round it, as besiegers do. Instead of this he shall return from Egypt to Assyria by the way that he came, along the coast, leaving Jerusalem on his right, unattacked, and he shall not come into this city, saith Jehovah. For I will protect it as a bird protects its nest, and save it, for My own sake and for the sake of My servant David."

The striking fulfilment of this prediction, which, indeed, was only the repetition of others as precise, is attested alike by sacred and profane antiquity. The Bible tells us that "the Angel of the Lord went forth that night and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand, and when men arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses."¹

¹ 2 Kings xix. 35.

"All the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and the captains of the camp perished," says another text.¹ "So Sennacherib returned with shame of face to his own land." In marked corroboration of this, Herodotus relates that the priests of Egypt told him how "Sennacherib, king of the Arabians and Assyrians, marched a large army into Egypt. On this the Egyptian army refused to help their king, Sethon, a priest of Vulcan. He, therefore, being reduced to a strait, entered the temple and lamented before the god the calamities impending. While thus engaged he fell asleep, and the god appeared to him in a vision, telling him that he would stand by him, and encouraging him by the assurance that he should not suffer, since he, the god, would send him help. Trusting this vision, the priest-king took with him such men as would follow him, and shut himself up in Pelusium, at the entrance of Egypt. But when they arrived there myriads of field mice, pouring in on their enemies, devoured their quivers and bows and the handles of their shields, so that when they fled, next day, defenceless, many of them were killed. And to this day, he adds, a stone statue of this king stands in the temple of Vulcan, with a mouse in his hand, and an inscription: 'Whoever looks on me, let him revere the gods.'"²

¹ 2 Chron. xxxii. 21. Isa. xxxvii. 36.

² *Herod.*, ii. 141. A similar statue of Apollo, with a mouse at his foot, stood at Chryse, in the Troad. It was said to commemorate the overthrow of the Tencirians by an army of field-mice, which ate the leather straps of their armour in the night, and forced them to retreat. Blakesley's *Herodotus*, i. 273.

Supposing this borrowed from the Egyptian tradition, it may have indirectly risen from the story of the defeat of the Assyrians. The mouse was the symbol of wasting and destruction, and was, perhaps, intended only to embody the idea of secret and irresistible ruin.

At what time in the prosecution of Sennacherib's designs against Jerusalem this catastrophe overtook him, is uncertain. Was "that night" alluded to in the account in the Book of Kings, the one following the day on which the words of doom had been spoken? Isaiah's declaration that the Assyrians would neither "come into the city, nor shoot an arrow, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it,"¹ seems at least to imply that, whether the prophet uttered his denunciation on the day of the second appearance of the enemy before Jerusalem, or at an earlier date, the crisis burst on them before they had completed their dispositions for attack, which, perhaps, was delayed by the desire to secure the surrender of the city by negotiation rather than force. The Greek version of the passage in Kings simply states that the visitation of God broke on the host by night, and Isaiah omits any special reference to the time.² Josephus,³ in agreement with the tradition of his day,⁴ assumes that the first day of the siege was also the last, and saw both the encampment and flight of the foe.

The vast multitude who perished—185,000 men⁵—points to a far greater calamity than could have befallen the army-corps detached for service against Jerusalem. It seems probable that affairs had not prospered with Sennacherib from the first, in spite of his pompous inscriptions. Indeed, it appears as if this could be read between the lines; for though he boasts of having gained a victory at Eltekeh,⁶ no list of prisoners or details of the booty are given, and he has to content himself with stating that he took the town of Eltekeh, and Timnah, which very possibly was only an unwallled village. He

¹ Isaiah xxxvii. 33.

² Isaiah xxxvii. 35.

³ Ant., X. i. 5.

⁴ Gemara Sanhed., iii. 26.

⁵ 2 Kings xix. 35.

⁶ See p. 437.

speaks of having shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage, but there is nothing said of the capture of Jerusalem, nor of the conquest of Egypt, or even of his having entered it, though this was the great object of the campaign. He vaunts, indeed, of having forced Hezekiah to hand over to him, along with the tribute he had imposed, "his daughters, and the male and female inmates of the palace," but this is in all probability an empty flourish, for the surrender of members of the royal family and of the members of the court, including the ladies of the harem, would have been a humiliation only to be exacted after the unconditional capture of the city, and there is no hint of that in the Bible narrative.

It seems probable that after the doubtful triumph at Eltekeh, Sennacherib contented himself with besieging and taking Lachish with part of his army; a large force being sent on, possibly, towards Egypt, while a corps was detached against Jerusalem. But the plague, which had perhaps already shown itself in the host, appears to have broken out violently in its different sections before Jerusalem, beyond Eltekeh, and at Libnah, to which the headquarters had been removed on the fall of Lachish. The Jewish tradition handed down from generation to generation understood the language of Scripture as indicating an outbreak of pestilence,¹ let loose, as in the case of the similar visitation of Jerusalem under David, by the angel of God specially commissioned to inflict the Divine wrath.² It was alarming enough that reports should be brought in of a new force under the redoubtable Tirhakah being on the march against him. Even had his armies been in good condition, a fresh struggle with so doughty an adversary was enough to raise anxiety. But the prospect under the circumstances

¹ *Joa., Ant.*, X. i. 5.

² *2 Sam.* xxiv. 15, 16, 17.

was disastrous. News from the advanced divisions and from the force at Jerusalem revealed the same widespread ruin of his host as he saw around him at Libuah. Instead of the thousands of mail-clad warriors, lately so eager for the battle, only a terrified remnant could marshal round him. His mighty men of valour—the rank and file of his proudest battalions—his officers and generals, had been struck down. “Captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously, with girdles on their loins, exceeding in dyed attire and scarlet robes, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men:”¹ squadrons, and companies, numerous at the leaves of the woods,² were lying dead around him. Asshur, his god, had forsaken him, and the evil spirits of the abyss, the Maskim, the Gigim, the Utuq, and the Spirits of the Air—those awful genii with bodies of flame—had been let loose on him and his host, to destroy them.³ Deserted by heaven, and left to the fury of the dreaded demons of pestilence and death, the panic-stricken king could think of nothing but instant, though ignominious, flight towards Nineveh; where he might hope to appease his gods. Orderly retreat was impossible. The skeleton battalions were too demoralized. A deadly fear had seized the survivors. The spectacle in each camp was too appalling to leave room for hesitation. The genius of Byron, embodying with wonderful accuracy the details given by the Hebrew sacred writers, helps us to realize it, in a measure.

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of his spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

¹ Ezek. xxiii. 12-15.

² Isa. x. 34.

³ Lenormant, *La Magis*, p. 27.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
The host, with their banners, at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host, on the morrow, lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved and for ever grew still.

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider, distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Asshur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted, like snow, in the glance of the Lord!

The transition of the population of Judah and Jerusalem from intense alarm to the wildest rejoicings, must have been like a sudden passing from the darkness and terrors of a tempest, to light and calm. The flight of the Assyrians was the signal for a wild pursuit by well-nigh all the surviving manhood of the land. The garrisons of the towns and fortresses which Sennacherib had taken had doubtless abandoned them, and the whole host, in tumultuous and disorganized crowds, could think only of escape to their own country. Isaiah describes the booty taken as immense. The inhabitants of Jerusalem rushed out, like locusts crowding to a green field, to plunder the camp.¹ Even the crippled and lame, he tells us, hurried to the spoil.² The hills over which the Assy-

¹ Isaiah xxxiii. 4.

² Isaiah xxxiii. 23.

rians fled received the name of the "mountains of prey."¹ As the French army in its retreat from Moscow was pursued even by the peasants of both sexes and remorselessly killed in thousands, in their helplessness, so, doubtless was it in this great uprising of the remnant of Judah. Weak and spiritless, at once from terror and disease, hill and valley saw the warriors of Sennacherib sink down to die, a prey "to the vultures and kites of the mountains and the wild beasts of the land: the birds summered on them and the wild beasts wintered on them."² Perhaps the only parallel of which details are known, must be sought in the flight from Russia in 1812, in which thirty thousand horses perished in a few days, and only twenty thousand men, without arms, remained alive, out of five hundred thousand.³

¹ Ps. lxxvi. 4.

² Isaiah xviii. 6.

³ Labaume's *Campaign in Russia*, pp. 339, 391.

The following note supplies a curiously analogous calamity to a besieging army in modern times:—

"To obliterate the disgrace of Pavia, Francis I., in league with England, Switzerland, Rome, Geneva, and Venice, against the powerful Emperor of Germany, sent a fine army into Italy. The emperor's troops gave way wherever the French plumes appeared, and victory seemed faithful only to the banners of France, and to the military experience of a tried leader. Everything promised a glorious issue; Naples alone, weakly defended by German lansquenets* and Spaniards, remained still to be vanquished. The siege was opened on the 1st May, 1528, and the general confidently pledged his honour for the conquest of this strong city, which had once been so destructive to the French. It was easy with an army of 30,000 veteran warriors to overpower the imperialists; and a small body of English seemed to have come merely to partake in the festivals after the expected victory. The city, too, suffered from a scarcity, for it was blockaded by Doria with his Genoese galleys; and water, fit to drink, failed after Lantrec had turned off the aqueducts of Poggioreale; so that the

* Lansquenet — Landsknecht, a common soldier.

A deliverance so wonderful might well fill the hearts of all with the deepest emotions. The mountain wave

plague, which had never entirely ceased among the Germans since the sacking of Rome, began to spread. Ere long however, pestilences began to rage among the troops, and human courage could no longer withstand the 'far shooting arrows of the god of day.' Those soldiers who were not already confined to bed in their tents were seen with pallid visages, swelled legs, and bloated bellies, scarcely able to crawl; so that, weary of nightly watching, they were often plundered by the marauding Neapolitans. The great mortality did not commence until about the 15th of July, but so dreadful was its ravages, that about three weeks were sufficient to complete the almost entire destruction of the army. Around and within the tents vacated by the death of their inmates, noxious weeds sprung up. Thousands perished without help, either in a state of stupor, or in the raving delirium of fever. In the entrenchments, in the tents, and wherever death had overtaken his victims, there these unburied corpses lay, and the dead that were interred, swollen with putridity, burst their shallow graves, and spread a poisonous stench far and wide over the camp. There was no longer any thought of order or military discipline, and many of the commanders and captains were either sick themselves, or had fled to the neighbouring towns, in order to avoid the contagion. The consequence was that within the space of seven weeks, out of the whole host, which up to that period had been eager for combat, a mere handful remained, consisting of a few thousands of cadaverous figures, who were almost incapable of bearing arms, or of following the commands of their sick leaders. On the 29th of August the siege was raised. Fifteen days after the heroic Lautrec, bowed down by chagrin and disease, had resigned his breath; the wreck of the army retreated amid thunder and rain, and were soon captured by the Imperialists, so that but few of them ever saw their native land again. This siege brought still greater misery upon France than even the fatal battle of Pavia, for about 5,000 of the French nobility, some from the most distinguished families, had perished under the walls of Naples. Its remoter consequences, too, were humiliating to the king and the people; since, owing to its failure, all those hitherto feasible schemes were blighted, which had for their

that hung tottering over the State the one moment had in the next sunk back and disappeared. What no available human power could have done had been accomplished, without the intervention of human agency, by a word from the lips of Jehovah. The mightiest of empires had been proved impotent as the idle pageant of a dream, against the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The war had become a great struggle between Assyrian idolatry and the true religion, by Isaiah's constant reference to Jehovah as the Leader and Champion of Judah. The triumph was God's. To Him belonged the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the majesty, and the victory.¹ The salvation He had wrought for His people was a repetition of that which He had accomplished under Moses, ages before, against Pharaoh and his host. For a moment the grand Pariticism of the better ages of Israel reappeared. The temple services, revived in the beginning of the reign with all the splendour of the time of David, Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, were never more earnest, or thronged by more eager crowds. The Psalms of David² and of Asaph, and the music of the Levitical choirs organized by Gad and Nathan, David's favourite seers, and by the poet king himself, filled the courts of the Sacred House with melodious anthems, and the smoke of countless sacrifices rose from the well ordered ministrations of the successive courses of priests. Nor was the inspiration of new psalmists wanting to round the fulness of that granted to the triumphant prophets. Some of their sacred lyrics,

object the establishment of French dominion beyond the Alps. The glory of the French arms was departed, and her proud banners cowered beneath an unhallowed spectre."—*Hecker's Epidemics of the Middle Ages*, pp. 721-2.

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 11.

² 2 Chron. xxix. 25, 31.

indeed, are still preserved in the Canon. Among these the forty-sixth psalm "by the sons of Korah," "a song, for sopranas," fitly embodies the national exultation at the fall of the arch-enemy of the land.

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear though the earth be shaken;
Though the mountains tremble on their foundations, beneath
the depths of the seas.
Let the waters roar and foam!
Let the mountains shake before their waves,
(Jehovah of Hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our strong defence!)

"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God;
The holy place of the dwellings of the Most High!
God is in her midst; she shall not be moved.
God shall help her, with the morning dawn.
The nations raged; their kingdoms were moved against us,
But God uttered His voice, and the earth melted with fear!
Jehovah of Hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our strong defence!

"Come, behold the deeds of Jehovah;
What wondrous things¹ He has done in the earth!
He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow; He snaps the spear asunder;
He burns the war chariot in the fire!

"'Be still,' says He, 'and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the heathen!
I will be exalted in the earth.
Jehovah of Hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our strong defence.'"²

The forty-seventh Psalm is also attributed to this time and is worthy of it.

¹ Ewald and Hitzig. Olshausen renders it, "terrors."

² Ps. xlvii.

"Clap your hands, all ye nations;
Shout unto God with the voice of triumph!
For Jehovah, the Most High, is terrible:
He, alone, is the Great King, over all the earth.
He subdues the nations under us:
The peoples under our feet.
He chooses our inheritance for us,
The land which was the glory of Jacob, whom He loved!

"God went up into His sanctuary, before our armies, with a
shout!
Jehovah went up before them with the sound of trumpets!
Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
For God is King of all the earth.
Sing ye praises, ye skilled choirs!¹
God reigns over the heathen!
He sits triumphant on His holy throne.

"The nobles of the peoples assemble
As the servants of the God of Abraham;
For all the shields—the protectors and kings—of the earth are
Jehovah's:
He is greatly exalted."²

The seventy-sixth Psalm has the inscription in the Septuagint, "On the Assyrian," and was thus attributed, centuries before Christ, to the great deliverance under Hezekiah. Its stirring words may well have expressed the triumph of so great a time.

¹ Hitsig refers the words translated, "with understanding," "to the trained singing of the choirs;" supposing that the soldiery have sung what precedes. *Die Psalmen*, vol. i. p. 262.

² An anticipation of a general acknowledgment of Jehovah by the kings and princes of the nations now subdued by Him. They are represented as consecrated to Him, and as having become the servants of Jehovah. May that time, in the highest sense, soon arrive!

"In Judah is God known;
 His name is great in Israel;
 In Salem is the covert¹ of the Lion of Judah:
 His lair² is in Zion.
 There brake he the flashing arrows of the bow;
 The shield, and the sword, and the battle.³
 Glorious art Thou, and majestic, coming down from the hills of
 Jerusalem, the mountains of prey;⁴
 The stout-hearted are spoiled: they sleep their sleep:
 None of the mighty warriors can find their hands.
 At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
 Both chariot and horse lie in a dead sleep.

"Thou, Thou art to be feared!
 And who may stand before Thee when Thou art angry!
 From heaven Thou soundedst forth Thy judgment:
 The earth feared and was still,
 When God stood up for judgment;
 To save the oppressed ones of the earth!

"For the wrath of man shall praise Thee;
 With what is left of that wrath, after Thy judgments,
 Thou girdest Thyself for Thine own purposes.⁵
 Praise Jehovah your God, and pay vows to Him!

"All ye that are round about Him,
 Bring gifts of homage to Him that ought to be feared!
 He mows down the pride of princes;
 He is terrible to the kings of the earth."

The profound impression of a deliverance so wonderful never passed away. Judas Maccabæus, on the eve of his great battle with Nicanor, recalled it to his soldiers. The story of the Great King's flight from Jerusalem before

¹ Same word = "den," Ps. x. 9; "covert," Jer. xxv. 38.

² Same word = Job. xxxviii. 40, "den." Ps. civ. 22. Cant. iv. 8. Amos iii. 4. Nah. ii. 12 (13).

³ Moll says, "weapon of war."

⁴ Moll. The hills henceforth famous for the booty gathered on their slopes and in their valleys.

⁵ This seems the meaning of these obscure words.

the outstretched arm of God is still read in the churches of Moscow on the anniversary of the retreat of the French from Russia. The opening watchword of the Jewish hymn, "God is our refuge and strength," was once the inscription over the grandest of Christian churches—that of St. Sophia at Constantinople; and it is the basis of Luther's magnificent hymn, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," sung by the German armies in the great French war of 1870, before each battle, as it had been in every earlier crisis of the nation for well nigh three hundred years.

The remaining years of Hezekiah's reign passed in peace and security. It was perhaps in them that he reconquered the portion of Judah wrested from Ahaz by the Philistines.¹ The roads, which had been deserted during the Assyrian troubles, were again thronged; the towns that had been destroyed were rebuilt. It has been fancied, but on apparently insufficient grounds, that Sennacherib returned to Palestine eleven years later, in B.C. 690. The Great King had little inclination to revisit scenes associated with such a tremendous disaster,² and hence Judah was left in peace. Districts that had fallen out of culture were again needed by prosperous communities, for the population gradually recovered the loss of their brethren deported to Nineveh. Colonies of Simeonites settled in the far south of the Negeb;³ trade revived through the land, and the kingdom was respected by surrounding nations. Like a summer sun, Hezekiah, seen through the calm golden air of his later years, seemed larger at his setting than when at his height.

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 8.

² Smith's *Assyria*, pp. 117, 123. Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, pp. 174-196.

³ 1 Chron. iv. 34-43.

Sennacherib survived the gigantic disaster of his invasion of Palestine, for nineteen years, which were marked by a succession of campaigns on a scale of grandeur that shows how readily the empire, by its pitiless conscriptions, recovered from the military losses it had sustained.

In the year B.C. 700 he marched southward, to Babylonia, for the second time. Merodach Baladan, after his defeat B.C. 704, had hidden for a time in the marshy districts of the lower Euphrates, but having been hunted out of them by the Assyrian generals sent in pursuit, embarked, with his gods and his treasures, from the coast of the Persian Gulf—"the Great Sea of the Rising Sun"—and having crossed it in safety, landed at Nagitu, a city of Elam. Here he was beyond the reach of Sennacherib, and, with his numerous followers, was cheered by a friendly welcome. It had been the emigration of a colony rather than the flight of an individual.

But Chaldaea was not pacified even when its king was lost. Suzub, a patriot chief, became so formidable in his resistance that Sennacherib had to set out against him in person, and dispersed his army, forcing him to flee to the hiding places of the South. Now, at last, the whole region that had caused so much trouble could be laid waste. Southern Babylonia was given up to the soldiery; its towns and villages plundered, and thirty thousand fighting men, captured in battle, deported to distant lands, or incorporated in the Assyrian army.

The years B.C. 699-698, or those immediately after, were spent in a fifth campaign against the wild mountain tribes north of Assyria. A vast mountain chain runs east and west, from the region of Lake Van into Asia Minor, forming there the chain now called the Taurus, but bearing throughout, among the Assyrians, the name

of Nipur. The parts of this great range which extend through Western Armenia, Cappadocia, and Cilicia, were invaded, to subdue the hardy races inhabiting their hill sides and valleys. The physical difficulties of such a task were immense, Sennacherib and his soldiers having often to climb the mountains after their foes. But in the end these were overcome, and the whole region devastated; its towns burned; its flocks and herds driven off; and vast numbers of the population, with their goods, carried into slavery in Assyria.

The flight of Merodach Baladan and his companions to Elam had, meanwhile, been a source of irritation to the Great King. They were his subjects, and he would force them to return; they were rebels, and he would show them his power, and crush them so that they should henceforth be harmless. Three or four years, from about B.C. 697, were therefore occupied with a series of operations against them. If Merodach Baladan had escaped by sea, he would follow him over the same waters, and thus escape the difficult task of fighting his way through the Elamite mountains. Establishing two dockyards—the one on the Euphrates, the other at Nineveh,—he caused a fleet, like Phœnician galleys,¹ to be built by shipwrights brought from Tyre and other Mediterranean ports, for the purpose. His own people being unacquainted with ocean navigation, sailors were engaged from Ionia, Tyre, Sidon, and other sea-faring races of the Levant. The vessels when finished were floated empty, down the Euphrates and Tigris, till the depth of water permitted their being laden. Stores and troops were then taken on board, and the armada dropped down towards the Persian Gulf. Before entering it, however, Sennacherib was careful to propitiate Hea, the god of the

¹ He calls them "Syrian ships."

ocean, by sacrifices, and by offering to him images of ships and fishes, made of gold, which he bore out to the sea-waters with imposing ceremonies, and dropped into the depths in which the god was supposed to dwell. Believing he had thus secured the favour of the Assyrian Neptune, he now set sail, keeping close to the coast, and having forced a landing at the Chaldean settlements, plundered them, carried off many of their inhabitants, and returned to the Euphrates with the captives and the spoil.

The unfortunate but unconquerable Babylonians, hoping that an undertaking apparently so rash and dangerous as this naval expedition might end in disaster, had once more risen, during Sennacherib's absence. Merodach Baladan was dead, but Suzub, the Chaldean patriot who had taken his place, obtained help from Elam and proclaimed himself king at Babylon, whither he was escorted by Elamite troops. Yet his triumph was brief; for the Assyrian generals instantly marched against him, and after defeating his army, took him prisoner and sent him in chains to Nineveh. Elam itself was next invaded, the city of Erech taken and sacked; its gods carried off, and a doubtful battle fought with the king, who himself led the army.

The resistance of Babylonia and Chaldæa for so many years had been made possible only by the support received from the Elamite monarch. New operations were therefore ordered against him; his mountains invaded; thirty-four cities and many villages taken, each, as it fell, being set on fire, till the smoke of them, in the words of Sennacherib himself, hid the face of the heavens like a vast cloud. The king of Elam, however, was still out of reach, for he had retired to Haidala, his mountain capital, in the interior, and the rains and

snows of winter, which had now set in, forced the Assyrians to suspend hostilities.

Suzub had escaped from Nineveh while Sennacherib was absent, and made his way back to Chaldæa, where his presence sufficed to excite a fresh revolt. He had again, however, to flee to Elam, but soon returned thence with a fresh body of followers, and once more entered Babylon as its king. Breaking open the treasures of Bel, in the capital, and of Nergal, at Cutha, and seizing the wealth belonging to these gods, he hastened to send it to Elam to secure help. It was now the year B.C. 692.



THE ROYAL CHARIOT OF THE ASSYRIAN KING.

A new king ruled in Elam, but he marched to Suzub's assistance, without delay, with an army of Elamites, Persians, Medes, Chaldæans, and others, and the son of Merodach Baladan, who inherited his father's undying hostility to Assyria. It was all, however, in vain. A great battle was fought on the lower Tigris, and Suzub, with his allies, utterly defeated.

"They seized the front of my fenced camp," says Sennacherib, "and discharged their arrows. Then I prayed to Asshur, the

Moon, the Sun, Bel, Nebo, Nergal, Ishtar of Nineveh, and Ishtar of Arbela, the gods, my protectors—that I might conquer my powerful enemies, and they heard my earnest prayers and came to my assistance. From my heart I vowed a thank-offering for it.

"I drove rapidly, in the fury of my heart, in my great war chariot—the Sweeper away of Enemies—I drove rapidly. I took in my hand my great bow which Aashur gave me; I enclosed my legs in greaves of fine workmanship, and, rushing on the whole army of those wicked enemies, I crushed them together in crowded confusion, and thundered like the god Sin.¹ By command of Aashur the great lord, my Lord, I hurled as it were fiery darts² against my enemies. I cut to pieces the hostile troops with the revolving blades.³ I captured the great Chain of Honour of the General of the Elamites. I eagerly attacked and defeated the chief officers of the king of Elam, who wore gold-handled daggers, and rings of bright gold, crowded round their legs—men like a herd of fat oxen. I cut off their heads, like victims, and tore off, with derision, their highly-worked decorations, casting down their rings and bracelets on the earth in a lofty heap, like the fall of a great shower. The faultless horses yoked to my chariot stepped slowly through deep pools of blood. My chariot wheels were clogged with blood and flesh as they swept away the slain and fallen. I salted the heads of the soldiers like fish, and packed them in great wicker baskets."⁴

Suzub, king of Babylon, and the king of Elam, mounting their chariots, tried to ride through the torrent of fugitives, but had to give up the attempt and to flee on foot. Squadrons of chariots pursued the remnant of the

* ¹ The god of the sky. He wielded the thunderbolt, like the Jupiter Tonans of the Romans.

² It has been thought that some composition like Greek fire was used by the Assyrians, but it is doubtful if there be an allusion to such an invention here.

³ Possibly Sennacherib refers to circular swords. See vol. ii. p. 125. Iron scythes fixed on the chariot wheels were apparently of a later date. See vol. ii. p. 385.

⁴ To be sent to Nineveh and exposed as trophies.

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enemy and slew all they overtook. This terrible battle ended the fighting of the year.

Next spring, however, apparently that of B.C. 691, Sennacherib, was once more in the field, and marching against Babylon, now left without outside support, stormed it and gave it up to his soldiery. The "city and houses" were destroyed from "the foundation to the upper chambers," the whole being burnt to the ground and the very ruins thrown down. The great walls of the city were demolished; the temples of the gods plundered and destroyed, the sacred images broken to pieces; the towers of brickwork levelled; and to complete the destruction, the embankment of the river or canal "Arakhti" was pierced, and the waters allowed to flood the whole site. Babylon was at last destroyed. Yet the Babylonians were ready to rise again, ten years later, when Esarhaddon was in Sennacherib's place.¹

Another expedition, not mentioned in the inscriptions but alluded to by Greek writers,² is said to have been made to Cilicia by Sennacherib; one incident at least being still of interest, that of his alleged founding of the city of Tarsus—afterwards the birthplace of St. Paul. It was certainly regarded by the Greeks as an Assyrian town, and it seems as if we might accept it as beyond reasonable doubt, that the native place of the great Apostle of the Gentiles owed its origin to the Great King who fled in shame from before the walls of Jerusalem.

During the last nine years of his reign, Sennacherib lived at Nineveh in the great palace which he had built for himself, the splendour of which may be in part

¹ Authorities. The Annals of Sennacherib on the Bellino Cylinder; the Taylor Cylinder; the Bavian Inscription and the Great Lull Inscription.

² Rawlinson's *Anct. Monarchies*, vol. ii. p. 453.

realized by the fact that it was nearly three times as long as St. Paul's cathedral and more than twice as deep or broad.¹ All that skill, unbounded wealth, the command of the labour of innumerable prisoners of war and other slaves, and the resources of a mighty empire, could do, was lavished on this amazing structure; the grandest building raised at any time even in Nineveh. True to the military instincts of his race, moreover, he set himself to fortify his capital so as to make it, if possible, impregnable. Its walls and gates were restored and partly rebuilt; the outer rampart constituting a gigantic fortification eight miles in circumference. On these vast undertakings the Cilicians, Elamites, Babylonians, Medes, and Jews, carried off from their native countries, were forced to toil; their labours, indeed, achieving most of the amazing results. The bricks for the city walls were made by them. They raised the great mounds of earth on which the palaces rested, and they dragged into their places, by the unaided strain of thews and muscle, the huge colossal figures which stood at the gates and doors of these vast structures.

We know nothing of the circumstances which led to Sennacherib's murder. To die a violent death was, indeed, the ordinary fate of Assyrian kings. He had a large number of sons, the eldest of whom had been made viceroy of Babylon, but appears to have died before his father. Disputes seem afterwards to have risen respecting the succession, ending in a plot by two of his sons, Adrammelech² and Sharezer,³ to murder their father and

¹ Length of St. Paul's, 514 feet; depth or breadth 286. Length of Sennacherib's palace 1,500 feet; depth or breadth 700 feet. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 125.

² -The god Adar is Lord. *Schrader*.

³ -(Asshur) protect the king!

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seize the throne. They committed their foul crime as he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch—the gracious one—the god, by a strange irony, to whom prayers for a blessing on families were specially directed.¹ But the parricides gained nothing by their act, for another



THE HAWK-HEADED GENIUS (KHORSABAD).

Perhaps the god Nisroch. - The pine cone in the left hand is always pointed towards the king, possibly as a symbolical medium of grace and protection. In the right hand is a sacred basket, symbolising, it may be, the gifts to be granted the monarch or other protected personage. Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, vol. ii. pp. 263-4.

brother, Esarhaddon, came forward to claim the throne, and they had to flee to Armenia, where the reigning prince allowed them to settle. Esarhaddon was then accepted as king by the whole nation.

¹ Schrader, pp. 208.

Note to List of Tribute, etc., Paid by Hezekiah, p. 442.

The list in the text is from Fox Talbot's translation, in the *Records of the Past* (vol. i. p. 41). Schrader varies the details in

some particulars. His version is as follows: "Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, works of metal, red glancing stones, great stones, couches of ivory, splendid chairs of ivory, hides of the elephant (P), elephant's teeth, (unknown) woods of various kinds, a rich treasure; and also his (Hezekiah's) daughters, his palace ladies (harem), and the male and female servants of the harem."—Art. *Sanherib*, in *Rishm*.

See, also, *Keilinschriften*, p. 176. The translation in *Rishm* is the latest published.

George Smith's translation reads:—"Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones of various sorts, couches and thrones of ivory, skins and horns of buffaloes, girls and eunuchs, male and female musicians."—*Hist. of Assyria*, p. 116.

Menant's translation is: "Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, metals, precious stones, pearls, thrones (or seats) adorned with *Amsi*, *Ka Amsi*, sandal wood, ebony, the contents of his treasure house, his daughters, the women of his palace, his male and female slaves."—*Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 219.

Josephus says that Sennacherib "was buried in his own temple, Araskö."—*Ant.*, X. i. 5.

The Plague usually appears first on the northern coast of Egypt, near which Sennacherib lay. It arises apparently from the malaria of the marshes in that region, as it has not returned at Alexandria since those in the neighbourhood of that city have been drained. (*Brockhaus' Lex.*, vol. ii. p. 642.) Midwinter is the ordinary time for its first appearance, and it lasts, at most, six months. At its first outbreak it causes almost instant death, and even during its whole visitation it is commonly fatal in a few hours. Clot-Bey, *De la Peste*.

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